U.S. Congressman Mike Bost accepts teachers' union endorsement

by Cory Davenport, Contributing Writer
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ALTON - U.S. Congressman Mike Bost (R) received the endorsement of the largest labor union in the **State of Illinois** Wednesday evening.

The **Illinois Education Association** (IEA) has a membership of more than 130,000 teachers in the state. **IEA Vice President Kathi Griffin** said she and her union were endorsing Bost due to his "strong record in support of public education in the **Metro East** and **Southern Illinois**." Bost accepted the endorsement at the **Riverbender.com Community Center** Wednesday evening.

"I am proud to have the endorsement of the Illinois Education Association," Bost said. "As a father and grandfather, there's no better investment we can make than in the future

of our young people. But if we expect them to reach their full potential, we must first empower our teachers and education professionals, the dedicated men and women who help build a brighter future from first period to closing bell."

Among Bost's advocacy for teachers includes his co-sponsoring of a bill, which would end the federal **Windfall Elimination Provision/Government Pension Offset** (WEP /GPO). WEP/GPO restricts the ability of teachers to draw Social Security due entirely to their payments to the **Teacher Retirement System**, Griffin said.

"It's a federal law, and we're trying to stop it," she said. "Bost is one of many members of Congress seeing the need for this law to be changed."

Griffin said many teachers take secondary jobs to aid their income. The Social Security they pay into with those jobs may not be collected upon retirement from teaching. Any Social Security paid from careers previous to teaching is also moot, according to this law. Bost said he would continue pushing to end the WEP/GPO as long as he remains in Congress.

"One of the great things we've experienced with Bost is we never usually get to speak with the actual elected official," Griffin said. "He always tries to meet with us face-to-face, and calls us at least if he cannot."

Bost said his passion for teachers is part of the passion he holds for his entire constituency. He said he is not a victim of partisanship and realizes he represents more than Republicans when he goes to Washington D.C.

"I realize I represent all the Democrats, Republicans and Independents in this area," he said. "I remember, though I run as a Republican, I still represent everyone."

Griffin said Bost is one of many representatives in Congress working too hard to be recognized as an extremist.

"Mike Bost has never hesitated to be a strong voice for our schools and students in the Metro East and Southern Illinois," Griffin said in a release. "He supports empowering parents and teachers at the local level and worked in a bipartisan manner to pass the **Every Student Succeeds Act**. At a time when both parties seem to talk past each other instead of working together, we know we can count on Mike Bost to cut through the partisanship in Washington and put the needs of his district first. Congressman Mike Bost has been so effective as a member of Congress for our students that the IEA/NEA has given him the grade of an A."