

WEA union is trying to close charter schools... again

By **LIV FINNE**
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As students at Washington schools, including charter public schools, work to complete their classes in anticipation of summer, lawyers at the WEA union are working to close every charter school in the state.

The powerful union has filed another lawsuit against charter school families, arguing that the voter-approved and publicly-funded schools shouldn't count as real public schools. Union executives are angry because teachers at charter schools are the only public school teachers who do not have to pay them monthly union dues.

The union lost in February 2017, when King County Superior Court Judge John Chun dismissed their lawsuit. Union lawyers have appealed, and are now urging the state supreme court to reverse Judge Chun and shut down all charter school funding.

schools.

Two more schools will open this fall, one in Walla Walla and one in Tukwila. Charter schools are popular with parents and most have waiting lists.

This is not the first time that WEA union executives have tried to close Washington charter schools. Led by WEA union president Kim Mead, the WEA union filed a lawsuit against charter schools in July 2013. The union lost the case when King County Superior Court Judge Jean Rietschel ruled that charters are legitimate public schools created by voters by initiative in 2012.

Undaunted, union lawyers appealed to the state supreme court, where in September 2015 the court ruled in their favor. The WEA had been contributing heavily to the justices' political campaigns and much of Chief Justice Madsen's ruling was copied word-for-word from the union's legal brief.

The ruling proved so unpopular and unfair that at the next meeting of the legislature Democrats and Republicans joined in a bipartisan vote to save charter schools, 27-20 in the Senate and 58-39 in the House. Even Governor Inslee, elected with WEA union support, allowed the bill to become law without his signature, refusing to close charter schools with his veto.

Yet the WEA union hasn't given up. In May, the state supreme court says it will again consider the union's case against charter school families.

The case is not about access to education – charter schools already provide that – it's about money and power. Union executives believe allowing non-union

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15 CONCLUSION
16 Plaintiffs have not demonstrated that the Charter School Act is unconstitutional beyond a
17 reasonable doubt. They have not shown that there is no set of facts of circumstances under
18 which the Act can be constitutionally applied. Accordingly, Plaintiffs' motion is DENIED and
19 the State's and Intervenor-Defendants' motions are GRANTED.¹⁰ Plaintiffs' remaining claims
20 in this matter are DISMISSED WITH PREJUDICE.
21 DATED this 17th day of February, 2017.
22 /s/ John H. Chun

Judge John H. Chun

Charter schools are a common, and in most states non-controversial, part of modern public education. Washington state has 10 charter schools serving 2,500 children. Most of these students are from low-income, minority families that are underserved by traditional

schools threatens their budget, and they worry the research shows charters provide a high quality public education for less money.

Judge Chun said the lawsuit against charters lacks legal merit. He's right. In other states millions of children attend charter schools every day without attack or controversy. Families in Washington should be allowed the same stability and peace of mind. The WEA union's hard-hearted targeting of charter school families should be thrown on the trash heap of mean-spirited failures, along with similarly discredited reactionary ideas.



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