



*Great Public Schools for Every Student*

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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## **NEA President discusses role of unions, budget cuts in higher education**

WASHINGTON—Americans must press their lawmakers to make education funding a priority, according to National Education Association President Dennis Van Roekel. Van Roekel appeared earlier this week on the University of the District of Columbia’s [Higher Education Today](#) program, hosted by educational consultant and author, Steven Roy Goodman.

Van Roekel talked about the role of unions in colleges and higher education institutions on the 30-minute television program. Higher Education Today airs on the [SouthEast Education Network](#) and Cablevision-Yonkers, as well as in Washington, DC on Comcast Channel 98, FiOS TV Channel 19, and RCN Channel 19 in Washington, DC. Van Roekel also discussed other higher education issues, especially in light of continuing budget cuts. The interview covered a range of education topics, including education reform, the rights of adjunct educators, job protection and compensation issues, as well as the effects of budget cuts to public colleges and universities.

A common theme throughout the interview was the effects of budget cuts on education at all levels across the country. “Assuming someone says ‘we don’t have the resources. How do we use what we’ve got to achieve your objectives,’” asked Goodman. Van Roekel responded that America lacks the *political will* to fund education, not the resources.

“The resources are there – we just need to invest them in education,” Van Roekel said. “You can go to any classroom in America and you’ll find the will every day. (Educators) give everything they have for the success of those students. They’ll do it with or without the resources, but they give everything they can.”

Although educators continue to do their best regardless of budget restrictions, educators “need the resources to do it right for every student as some have greater needs,” said Van Roekel. “As a nation, we have to make choices. I think we need to invest in education.”

NEA has 3.2 million members and represents over 215,000 faculty and staff in higher ed. Van Roekel believes collective bargaining is a right and is responsible for much of America’s progress. “Nothing in America is accomplished without collective action,” he said. “It is people coming together when they believe deeply in something. (NEA members) have very strong feelings about what ought to happen from pre-K to (higher ed) and we just want to be heard.”

To see the interview in its entirety, please click [here](#).

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*The National Education Association is the nation's largest professional employee organization, representing 3.2 million elementary and secondary teachers, higher education faculty, education support professionals, school administrators, retired educators and students preparing to become teachers*