

## **MAJORITY IN NEW YORK INTELLIGENCE SQUARED U.S. AUDIENCE FAULT TEACHERS UNIONS FOR THE POOR STATE OF AMERICAN SCHOOLS**

### ***68% Reject the Motion “Don’t Blame Teachers Unions for our Failing Schools”***

NEW YORK – March 17, 2010 - Intelligence Squared U.S. (IQ2US), the Oxford-style debate series, an initiative of The Rosenkranz Foundation, hosted a lively debate on Tuesday night on the role that teachers unions play in the American school system. The motion under consideration was “Don’t blame teachers unions for our failing schools,” and by the debate’s conclusion, the audience overwhelmingly rejected it. While acknowledging other factors that contribute to the challenges in American education, the team arguing against the motion convinced most in the audience that improvement needed to start with reform of the powerful teachers unions.

As the debate began, 24% of the crowd voted in favor of the motion, 43% were against it and an additional 33% were undecided. After the debate, which included questions from the large and engaged audience, the final vote had 25% supporting the motion, 68% rejecting it and only 7% remaining undecided.

The evening’s winning team argued against the motion and included **Terry Moe**, William Bennett Munro Professor of Political Science at Stanford University, **Rod Paige**, former Secretary of Education and **Larry Sand**, retired teacher and President of the California Teachers Empowerment Network.

Arguing for the motion was **Kate McLaughlin** a teacher from Lowell, MA, **Gary Smuts**, Superintendent of California's ABC Unified School District and **Randi Weingarten**, President, American Federation of Teachers, AFL-CIO.

Among the debate’s highlights:

“...Our opponents are going to say tonight, and Randi has already said, that there is really no conflict between standing up for the jobs of teachers and doing what's best for kids. But the thing is this... there is a conflict. And that's why we can't get bad teachers out of the classroom, because they protect them.”  
– **Terry Moe**

“The bottom line is, we need . . . . well prepared and supported teachers, real engaged curriculum, safe and orderly environments which is what we see in charter schools all the time, good, good management that works together. And at the end of the day, if we have to find ways, as I said in 2004, to police our own profession, fire teachers that are not making the grade, we want to do that. That's who this teachers union is.” – **Randi Weingarten**

“Organizations have one primary interest. They may have some other interests but they have one main interest. Teachers union main interest is the welfare of their members.” – **Rod Paige**

“Besides families, no one cares more about students and their learning, especially students living in poverty, than their teachers.” – **Kate McLaughlin**

“In educating children, there is nothing more valuable than a dedicated and gifted teacher and nothing more harmful and destructive than a bad one. And it's those teachers, the mediocre and the incompetent ones that the unions typically represent.” – **Larry Sand**

“The number one job, according to my union president, of the union reps in my district, is student achievement. And we work together to do that. It's one of the most powerful forces in our district.” – **Gary Smuts**

**John Donovan**, correspondent for ABC News *Nightline*, is moderator of Intelligence Squared U.S. debates. Dana Wolfe is the executive producer.

To view transcripts and videos, download audio or video clips or learn more about Intelligence Squared U.S. please visit: <http://www.intelligencesquaredus.org>.

*Launched in September 2006, the goal of Intelligence Squared U.S., an initiative of the Rosenkranz Foundation, is to raise the level of public discourse and promote a realization that, on contentious issues, those who challenge the conventional wisdom have intellectually respectable and often persuasive viewpoints. We encourage citizens to “Think Twice” about their opinions and participate in the conversation, and we provide a forum for balanced discussion that transcends emotion and ideology. Through an annual series of 10 live Oxford-style debates, IQ2US brings together experts and audience around public policy and cultural issues. In fact, the live audience participates in each debate by voting on the propositions at the top and bottom of the debate evening. IQ2US debates air on the Bloomberg Television network and are heard on more than 200 NPR stations nationwide.*

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