

National Education Association's 87th Representative Assembly

**Sunday, July 6, 2008
Update From Our Nation's Capitol**

Delegates to the Representative Assembly often have an opportunity to debate hot button issues. OMTA's own Fred Young felt compelled to rise in opposition to an issue submitted to the NEA by another California teacher. The proposal was to prohibit exhibitors whose printed materials and ideology was in contrast with accepted NEA curriculum. His prepared 2-minute speech follows:

"Good afternoon Reg. I am Fred Young from California, speaking as an individual, in opposition to New Business Item 74. I congratulate all of you in this convention hall because I know that at some point in your life you have stood up to support the rights of others, others with whom you may not agree.

So many times we have been members of a group and yet we have respected the rights of other groups. With such incredible diversity in this room, we can be proud of the accomplishments that we have achieved. Accomplishments that represent so many, even though we don't agree with their beliefs, but we have fought for their right not to be banned.

Now is one of those times to fight again. I politely ask that we all consider the implications of New Business Item 74. If an idea, true or false, is contrary to our belief system, does that mean we should ban it the first chance we get?

If history teaches us anything, it should teach us that dangerous groups ban what they don't like; dangerous groups ban what they fear. When the most hated groups of the past banned books, do we think that they woke up one morning and said to themselves: 'Hey, I think I'll do something vicious today.' No, they thought they were doing the right thing. They 'knew' they were right. Do we wish to ban these books now in the exhibit hall because we know we are right?

There are those who are afraid these ideas could be perceived as science. So now because of fear we resort to banning books? Is this really who we are?"

This New Business item was defeated by vote of the Representative Assembly. Free speech prevailed.