

Worth the Cost?

A recent article in [The Plain Dealer](#) detailed the 12 teacher strikes that have occurred in Ohio’s public schools since the year 2000. An even closer look at these strikes reveals further details that are causing our taxpayers concern. Upon examining the negotiation process, the name of one out-of-town attorney appears: **Bill Pepple**.

As noted in the table below, Bill Pepple and his firm Pepple and Waggoner have been involved in 8 of the 12 strikes. This firm promotes itself at the annual conference of the Ohio School Boards’ Association, offering seminars on how to run strikes and labor crises and marketing itself on breaking the backs of teachers’ unions. Since the year 2000, Pepple and Waggoner have collected a large amount of legal fees directly related to strikes that they provoked – an estimated \$3,444,000. This amount does not include any other legal fees incurred during the negotiations leading up to a strike. Prior to this strike, the Strongsville Board of Education used \$601,293.40 tax payer dollars from 2011 to 2012 to negotiate. As of Strike Day 10, Pepple and Waggoner have logged approximately \$100,000 worth of billable hours; combined with the \$601,293.40 previously spent, the Board has likely paid Pepple and Waggoner about \$700,000 thus far. How much more money will Strongsville taxpayers spend on these attorneys?

Even when teachers are not forced to strike, Bill Pepple has a history of acrimonious negotiations. Ohio taxpayers may also recall the following recent labor disputes that nearly resulted in strikes: Brecksville-Broadview Heights, Barberton, and Wapakoneta. In each of these districts, Pepple & Waggoner’s staunch refusal to negotiate in good faith with the teachers kept the communities in a state of fear, with taxpayers and parents holding their collective breath and hoping for an eleventh-hour settlement. Though eleventh-hour settlements were reached, legal fees were high: in Brecksville-Broadview Heights, \$349,588.14; in Barberton, \$135,366.92; in Wapakoneta, \$424,124.75. These three communities were the lucky ones – others, as we have seen, suffer quite a different fate.

So what, then, will happen in Strongsville? The answer depends solely on the actions of its Board of Education. Bill Pepple’s record speaks for itself – continuing to rely on this profiteering out-of-town attorney firm will only prolong an already painful, costly strike. Were the Strongsville Board of Education to fire Bill Pepple and hire an attorney that believe in good faith bargaining, we might all be surprised at how quickly this situation is resolved.

Public Teacher Strikes Since 2000

Strikes in Bold and Marked with an Asterisk were Provoked by Bill Pepple*

School District	County	Start Date	Length	Estimated Legal Fees
Jackson Milton	Mahoning	9/6/00	12 days	\$150,000
East Cleveland*	Cuyahoga	4/15/02	14 days	\$150,000
Maple Heights*	Cuyahoga	9/4/02	63 days	\$750,000
Eastern*	Pike	9/26/02	106 days	\$1,200,000
Bridgeport	Belmont	11/14/05	23 days	\$300,000
Huber Heights	Montgomery	8/25/06	7 days	\$100,000
Perkins*	Erie	8/28/06	9 days	\$100,000
Richmond Heights*	Cuyahoga	5/2/07	25 days	\$300,000
Harrison*	Harrison	10/1/07	12 days	\$150,000
Edison	Jefferson	11/7/07	10 days	\$100,000
Newton Falls*	Trumbull	9/5/08	6 days	\$70,000
Strongsville*	Cuyahoga	3/04/13	?????	??????????
Total Strike Fees Collected by Pepple & Waggoner to Date				\$3,000,000

Bill Pepple’s refusal to settle is in *his* best interests but in Strongsville’s worst. The longer this labor dispute lasts, the more money this lawyer makes while the community and taxpayers, and ultimately the students, suffer. For this reason, the Strongsville Education Association calls on the members of the Board of Education to act in the community’s best interests and fire Pepple and Waggoner.