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*A member-directed union representing 28,000 public school teachers, faculty and education support professionals across Nebraska.*

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## **Teacher Leader Calls on Candidates to Apologize** *Senators Riepe and Thibodeau Misleading Voters on Education Records*

Lincoln – The president of the 28,000-member Nebraska State Education Association has called on State Senators Merv Riepe and Theresa Thibodeau to apologize for their deceptive campaign mailers in which the two claim they support public education.

“Merv Riepe and Theresa Thibodeau are trying to mislead voters with a cookie-cutter postcard that attempts to show that the senators voted to support children and public education. Unfortunately, these two senators have not been supportive of education,” said Jenni Benson, NSEA president.

“Senators Thibodeau and Riepe each received a grade of ‘F’ from teachers because of their votes on public education issues. Both have announced support for voucher-like schemes and unregulated charter schools,” said Benson. “These postcards distort the truth about these senators’ voting records. Senators Riepe and Thibodeau have not been supportive of public education and the nearly 400,000-plus students who attend our public schools.”

Senators Riepe and Thibodeau recently mailed oversized postcards that are practically identical – both feature a classroom chalkboard with messages about how they voted against cutting education more than it was cut this past legislative session.

Benson said that Sens. Thibodeau and Riepe’s mail pieces also failed to mention or take responsibility for the deep budget cuts and property tax increases that the four school districts they represent had to make.

“In Sen. Thibodeau’s district, Omaha Public Schools are now forced to cut \$26 million from programs for students, and Westside voters were forced to increase property taxes to make up for state aid shortfalls.

“In Sen. Riepe’s district, Millard Public School voters were forced to increase property taxes, and Ralston Public Schools have less state funding and could also be forced to make budget cuts or raise property taxes in the future,” said Benson.

Nebraska public schools currently rank 49<sup>th</sup> in state aid per pupil and 12<sup>th</sup> in property tax per pupil and that trend will only continue unless state senators and the Governor step up and do what is right for children and public education, said Benson.

“Senators Riepe and Thibodeau each deserved and received an ‘F’ on their support for public education – and for them to try to portray it as anything better than failing is deceitful,” said Benson. “They need to apologize for their attempt to mislead voters.”

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*The Nebraska State Education Association is a member-directed professional employee organization representing 28,000 Nebraska public school teachers, higher education faculty, education support professionals, retired educators and students preparing to become teachers.*

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