



Teachers Association of Long Beach, CTA/NEA

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UPDATE

February 21, 2010

BUDGETS, BARGAINING, & LAYOFFS

“FURLOUGH DAYS”, BENEFIT CUTS...AND LAYOFFS

The TALB Bargaining Team and the District Bargaining Team continue to meet in negotiations with the goal of bargaining a reasonable and fair contract package given the difficult economic circumstances. Our ability to get a fair contract mostly depends on our own solidarity. We are getting measured pressure from the District to take cuts in both salary and benefits. In response we are looking for measured ways to achieve ongoing savings and still protect the core integrity of our health benefits structure and our salary schedule.

CAN'T WE JUST TAKE “FURLOUGH DAYS” AND AVOID LAYOFFS? Three “furlough days” (which is more accurately described as reduction in the school year and prorated reduction in pay), is one District proposal. The District is also proposing health benefit cuts via a 5% employee co-pay on insurance costs and a series of other benefit changes. The District is also proceeding with a layoff of 651 teachers. They are not offering to trade one for the other. Taking 3 “furlough days” will not avert layoffs, for these reasons:

- ✓ ***The District unilaterally controls the decision to layoff teachers.*** Agreeing to “furloughs” in exchange for a reduction in layoffs requires the district to give TALB contractual input on overall District staffing, including management staffing (management staffing patterns are not negotiable under the bargaining law). Without such an agreement any trade off of salary reductions for layoffs is unenforceable. Given the fact that the District has so heavily opted for teacher layoffs while preserving managers (see information later in this UPDATE), such an agreement without control over staffing would likely only save managers, not teachers, and there would still be no guarantee of layoff protection this year or next.
- ✓ ***A reduction in the number of layoffs will likely occur anyway.*** The budget situation is difficult and will continue for another year, at least. However, the District has decided to layoff *more* teachers than necessary. In fact, they clearly will re-hire a number of the 651 teachers targeted for layoff due to attrition AND because they already plan to restore CSR at a number of schools using categorical funding. Therefore, any agreement to “trade” salary for layoffs would really be a phantom trade for jobs that would have been restored anyway.
- ✓ ***Avoiding layoffs would require an ongoing double digit salary decrease, not a 3 day furlough.*** It would take a double digit salary reduction and severe benefit cuts in order to completely eliminate layoffs as proposed by the District. They want pay cuts in addition to layoffs, not one or the other.
- ✓ ***The funding shortfall requires ongoing savings.*** So called “furloughs” are a short term reduction in pay (at this time no more than 3 years). Staffing costs are ongoing. When “furloughs” end, the Districts will likely be left with a cash flow problem that could then require layoffs ...the very layoffs the furloughs were intended to avoid. Exacerbating matters is the fact that this is not a one-year problem and some additional amount of cuts will be necessary next year.
- ✓ ***Cannibalizing our contract to pay for programs that taxpayers refuse to support will lead to long term school funding reductions.*** Programs cuts (meaning jobs) return before salary cuts are restored, when the funding does return the programs will also return, but any salary cuts typically take more time to recover. Any pay cut (including “furloughs”) will also hurt retirement. In a best case scenario we are faced with multiple years of no or little salary increases and regular attacks on our benefits. If we also volunteer to give up our own compensation to pay for programs the taxpayers should pay for, there will be little incentive to increase school funding. The result will be that our salary, retirement, and health benefits will face long term reductions. The youngest of our members will pay the biggest price for these reductions since they still will have many years left to work.

WE NEED TO FIGHT LAYOFFS AND DEFEND THE CONTRACT... To their credit, the District has been clear that they can't avoid layoffs nor can they give up their management rights on staffing in order to assure TALB that “furloughs” would avert layoffs. In return TALB has been diligent in attempting to craft a deal that provides ongoing savings (maybe even more than the furlough days) and protects the integrity of our contract.

We also need to continue fighting layoffs. TALB made unsuccessful proactive attempts to fend off layoffs by working with the District on a parcel tax measure last November and by supporting statewide temporary tax increases last May. We attempted to rally our members and supported these efforts as we knew that layoffs were coming if we could not increase funding. Now, without extra funding, we must fight off *additional* cuts proposed by the state. The LBUSD could lose an ADDITIONAL \$20 million in local funding if we don't convince our legislators to stop the cuts to our local schools. **Please support this effort to fend off more layoffs by attending a PROTEST RALLY on March 4 at Wilson High School. The rally starts at 4:15 and will include CTA President David Sanchez and a guest appearance by Tom Morello of Rage Against the Machine fame. See your TALB Rep for details on the rally or go to www.talb.org.**

ARE THE LAYOFFS EXCESSIVE? IT IS A QUESTION OF PRIORITIES. By any measure the layoff of 651 teachers slated to get a March 15 pink slip is tragic. For the teachers who get the layoff notice it is a professional, economic, and personal loss. For the tens of thousands of students they would have taught and the lives they would have enriched, it is an unquantifiable loss of an adult role model that may have made the difference in their lifetime. For the teachers, nurses, and librarians who are left behind to do more with less, and without their colleagues, the challenge will be to keep the schools functioning with resourcefulness, spit and bubble gum – while avoiding the demoralizing impact of the cuts and the attacks on salary and benefits.

Unfortunately, it appears the School Board has elected to lay off more, maybe far more, teachers than necessary. **FIRST**, the District has been clear that it plans to retain CSR in some schools by using categorical funds. This will mean many of the teachers who are on the layoff list due to the elimination of CSR will be rehired. **SECOND**, the District has not accounted for even a conservative number of retirements. While the School Board aborted the Early Retirement incentive there will be a predictable number of retirements and the layoff decision should have at least minimally accounted for this attrition. **FINALLY**, instead of reducing the management corps, the District decided to focus the reduction of staff on teachers. A whopping 87% of the layoffs announced last week are considered as certificated non-management (i.e., teachers). A scant 11% of the layoffs are considered as managers by the district. Currently only 58% of all district employees are considered certificated non-management and 14% are classified as managers. So, if this pattern continues it appears that the already “healthy” management ratios will actually increase as the result of this budget crisis, not decrease as logic and common sense might suggest. If the District focused savings on some of these jobs away from the classroom, the result would be fewer teacher layoffs.

Add it all up, and there are probably 200 teaching jobs that should not even be slated for reduction. It is not clear why the District is taking this approach after working so hard to preserve the classroom program last year. In the case of the elementary CSR it may be a misguided and likely illegal gambit to rehire formerly probationary and permanent elementary teachers into temporary jobs. Or it may be an attempt to use the shock value to put pressure on TALB to accept salary and benefit cuts at the bargaining table. Whatever the reason, the District should not put more people through this process than is absolutely necessary.

QUICK HITS

TALB ELECTIONS: It is almost time for TALB Elections. Look for a separate flyer in your box this week with information or visit www.talb.org.

IF YOU GET A LAYOFF NOTICE: We have had numerous reports that site managers are providing inaccurate information regarding layoff rights. Stay informed and get accurate information. The February 5 UPDATE was devoted to guidance and support concerning what you should do if you get a layoff notice. You can read that UPDATE and get more detailed information at www.talb.org. The information is under “Announcements” on the left side of the home page. We have also scheduled informational meetings at 4:30 PM, on March 11 at UAW Hall (3971 Pixie Ave, Lakewood) or March 12, at Longfellow Elementary auditorium (3800 Olive Ave, Long Beach) Look for more details on our website in the coming days.

MARCH 4 – MARK YOUR CALENDAR: PROTEST RALLY – NO MORE CUTS, NO COMPROMISES: Come hear great speakers and music, including CTA President David Sanchez and Tom Morello: The Nightwatchman. Be a part of the movement to save our schools.

RETIREMENT PLANNING WORKSHOP: TALB's annual retirement planning workshop will be held on March 11 at 4:30 PM, at Longfellow Elementary auditorium (3800 Olive Ave, Long Beach). This is a long term planning workshop intended for those who want a basic overview of the retirement system. Specific retirement calculations are not provided and those who are considering immediate retirement will still need to see an STRS counselor. Please RSVP to Vonnie at vmarino@talb.org or call 562-426-6433.

STAY UNITED AND STAY INFORMED. If you have any questions contact your TALB Association Representative, call TALB at 562-426-6433, or go to www.talb.org