



Teachers Association of Long Beach, CTA/NEA

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UPDATE

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BARGAINING REPORT

SLOW PROGRESS...DISTRICT "PR" UNDERMINES PROCESS

Negotiations with the District have been challenging. Unfortunately, the District's recent "Bargaining Updates" serve to undermine the process and genuine efforts of both the TALB Bargaining Team and the District Bargaining Team as they attempt to reach a fair compromise.

For example, the District's recent March 12 "Bargaining Update" suggests that the District has proposed to save "at least 200 jobs ". **Their actual proposal on March 11 did not include any kind of assurance that at least 200 jobs would be saved.** They made this claim and then actually attached their proposal, allowing attentive readers to see that their rhetoric and their proposal were not the same.

In fact, they said (not proposed) that "about" 200 jobs saved was an "estimate" only *after* the TALB team asked the question. They never actually made a written proposal to save 200 jobs and they still haven't. **They were also very clear that any jobs saved were only for one year and those same TALB members were at risk of being laid off in the following year.**

In the same "Bargaining Update" they admitted that 200 of those who got layoff notices "were to provide necessary alternatives to the layoff process" -- which means they added 200 notices for no other reason than to buffer their layoff by an extra 200 to account for mistakes that they think they have made in the process; so at least 200 unfortunate human beings are being put through this process for absolutely no reason. Is it coincidental that in negotiations they are saying they will "save" 200 jobs they never actually intended to cut?

Here are a few of the other recent questions that we have been getting:

Where did they come up with the number of 200 jobs saved? They did not explain how they came up with the number. We do know that they have over-noticed on the layoffs by several hundred teachers (about 100 for retirement attrition + about 100 for leave replacement + 200 for "alternatives to the hearing process" + approximately 150 for announced partial restoration of CSR using alternate categorical funds = actual layoff of approximately 450).

Is there a way to verify that these are real jobs that will be saved by their proposed cut in pay and health benefits? We asked for several pieces of data that will allow us to better assess their proposal, but in the end it will be difficult to directly attribute "jobs saved" to "cuts made" unless they provide some agreement on the calculations that make up their "over-noticing" of laid off teachers as noted above.

If salary cuts via "furloughs" are temporary, how can the District agree to ongoing job protections? The District is not proposing ongoing job protections, only one-year "mitigation." **Their calculation of "200 jobs saved" assumes an agreement on pay reductions via furloughs AND health benefit cuts via a 5% escalating premium co-pay.** Furloughs are temporary savings. In fact, if implemented they could actually cause a cash flow problem when they terminate because the effect will be to increase salary costs at a time the District may not be experiencing any revenue increases, resulting in more layoffs over the next few years.

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If the administrators are taking 3-furlough days and we agree to 3-furlough days aren't we taking a higher percentage pay cut? Yes. One of many problems with the District's "furlough" proposal as it stands (3-days) is that they are proposing that administrators will actually take a lower percentage salary cut since their work-year is longer.

Is TALB looking for compromises that will save money in salary and benefits to help ease the District's financial shortfall? Yes. We are seeking a fair compromise that considers District proposals to cut salaries and benefits, the budget shortfall and related layoffs, and the need to protect salaries and benefits. Obviously, it is a challenge to balance these somewhat competing interests. ***Their proposal to add a 5% premium co-pay to health benefits would leave TALB members vulnerable as the co-pay amount would increase annually by the same percentage that health benefits costs increase – some years this will result in double digit increases; and over time the co-pay will be several hundred dollars per month, or more, and will increase at a rate much higher than salaries increase.***

Are we close to an agreement with the District? Based on their public rhetoric, likely not. Based on their behavior at the bargaining table, maybe so. Bargaining with the District at the table is cordial, productive, and respectful. Away from the table, the District has at times been disorganized, unwilling to share necessary requested information, and the School Board continues to avoid public discussion on important issues by cancelling or rescheduling meetings.

What are the "additional efforts" proposed by the Superintendent to save jobs? The Superintendent has highlighted SB 1396, a bill by Senator Alan Lowenthal and sponsored by LBUSD, as a savior in this budget shortfall mess. We hope he is right and there is some value in the proposed legislation. The problem is that no one really knows how this proposal will actually work and he has yet to explain it. In January, TALB asked Board President Stanton to schedule an open hearing on the proposal. To date, there has been no School Board hearing on SB 1396. The District hasn't even attached the SB 1396 language to a public Board agenda packet. At the same time the State has had public hearings on this proposal and the Superintendent is traveling to Sacramento to testify on the District's behalf, the local School Board has left everyone in the dark. Despite the claims, no one knows exactly how this bill will help save jobs. The Superintendent said at one point it would free up "\$20 million" in funds; then he said at a recent school board meeting it would free up "\$10 million"; and now in a recent LB Business Journal article the District is quoted as saying "it could potentially free up \$140 million in local school funding."

Why is Long Beach sending so many more layoff notices than other Districts? Approximately 22,000 of the State's 307,000 K-12 teachers, or 7 percent, received a layoff notice. In contrast, Long Beach issued notices to approximately 20% of our teachers. **A staggering 4.5% of all of the notices in the state were issued by the LBUSD! Expect the District to unilaterally pull back a number of layoff notices in the coming weeks (jobs that were never really slated for reduction) in an attempt to generate positive headlines going into the April 13 School Board Election.** At this point, they appear to be using the teacher layoff as a pawn to leverage health benefit cuts in negotiations and the outcome of the School Board Election.

It seems like everyone is taking "furloughs" in other Districts...Is this really true? No it is not true. The District put yet another misleading headline on their website. The truth is that it is a mixed bag. Some school districts have done "furloughs", some have not. In the case of Los Alamitos (the example cited on the LBUSD website), what they left out was that Los Al did agree to furloughs AND laid off teachers last year...and the fact that Los Al had the foresight to act early and do a moderate layoff earlier (last year) resulted in saving many teacher jobs.

Why is there only one School Board meeting this month? Normally, there are two School Board meetings each month. This month they only have one scheduled meeting and have moved that one meeting to a different day of the week. Board meetings are staged and highly controlled events on normal days – with the agenda filled with awards resulting in limited seating and public input on issues relegated to the latter part of the meeting. Now they have taken the additional step of avoiding meetings altogether in the middle of layoffs and, not coincidentally, the School Board President's re-election bid.

Are there any other practical steps we can take to mitigate layoffs? Here are three immediate actions you can take. **FIRST**, email School Board President Mary Stanton at wmstan43@aol.com or call her at 562-427-2013. Ask her why the school board has sent so many more notices than other Districts? Why the District has sent over 1,000 layoff notices, yet has over 1,000 managers? And why the School Board is avoiding public discussion on important issues by cancelling meetings? You can also get more background information on what to say by reading the February 21st letter from TALB to School Board President Mary Stanton at www.talb.org. **SECOND**, call your legislator at our special hotline number, 1-888-268-4334. Tell them you are a voter, a local educator, and ask them to block all cuts to education. **THIRD**, go to the HOW I CAN HELP STOP THE CUTS link at www.talb.org for more ideas on how to take action.