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## Responsible Representation

Since 1963, our union has taken many strong, positive actions - based on facts, not rhetoric. Our leaders have made tough choices **after** careful analysis and thoughtful debate. Our leaders and members have made many individual and collective sacrifices to pursue our union's two-fold mission of advocating for educators and for the students and families we serve.

## Irresponsible Procrastination

For months, MTEA leaders, staff, and attorneys have asked MPS for information related to the district's financial situation - including health insurance costs. We need the data to represent our members in contract talks.

On May 18, MPS provided some of the requested information. However, on May 19, the district refused to provide health care claims data. As Sharpener went to press, our attorneys were considering legal actions to resolve the new delaying tactic.

## Bargaining in Public

The reason for months of delays and now a refusal to provide our union with information: the district's strategy for contract bargaining. On health care costs, top administrators and school board members have repeatedly gone to the public - instead of the bargaining table - always blaming teacher health costs.

The Journal-Sentinel has devoted considerable coverage and editorial commentary based on the health care messages issued by MPS. To review MTEA President Mike Langyel's responses, please go to [mtea.org](http://mtea.org).

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# Layoffs: What We Know Now

The superintendent's proposed MPS budget for 2010-11 will mean layoffs for members in our union's four units - teachers, educational assistants, substitute teachers, and school accountants/bookkeepers. Years of a broken system of state funding for public schools exacerbated by a series of dysfunctional MPS administrations and short-sighted school boards are again taking a painful toll on staffs and students. There will be a teacher layoff for the first time since 1982.

In the past decade, our EA members have experienced layoffs several times. For the past two school years, MPS laid off general EAs during the summer, but our union worked hard with key School Board members to restore the EA positions in the fall. This year is different.

Based on the MPS budget data we've received, the funding situation is much more serious than in recent years. Unless Congress acts quickly to enact substantial federal funding for schools, layoffs will not be averted for 2010-11 in MPS and many other cities.

## National Problem Needing a National Solution

Urban districts across the country are being hit with a devastating one-two punch: Longstanding inadequate, unequal funding in state after state - coupled with an economy that has seen only the wealthy recover. The stimulus funding which maintained and created jobs is running out.

**In the short term**, passage of the "Keep Our Educators Working Act" is seen as a way to avoid massive cutbacks and layoffs in school districts nationwide. It would provide \$23 billion, mainly for K-12 public schools. (The "Local Jobs for America Act" also includes \$23 billion specifically to fund education jobs during the next two years.)

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## What You Can Do **NOW** to Prevent Layoffs

- ◆ Call Sen. Russ Feingold (202) 224-5323 and Sen. Herb Kohl (202) 224-5653 to urge them to prevent a funding catastrophe in our schools by supporting the "Keep Our Educators Working Act."
  - ◆ Go to [mtea.org](http://mtea.org) for details on how to e-mail the President and your Congressional representatives. It's quick and easy, and you can sign up for timely alerts from NEA on legislation affecting educators and public educators.
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## Steps to Minimize Teacher Layoffs

The MBSD/MTEA teacher contract requires the MPS administration to take steps when the district determines layoffs are necessary:

- ◆ Solicit qualified volunteers.
- ◆ Offer to extend all unpaid leaves.
- ◆ Approve all unpaid leave requests for one school year, for any reason.

*Please continue on back...*




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## Information/Support for Laidoff Members

As our EA members know all too well, layoffs can be very stressful for members and their families. It is essential for our union to provide:

◆ **Accurate and comprehensive information.** Each member has individual questions. Often general answers on concerns such as unemployment compensation do not address unique situations.

◆ **A community of support.** For many members, it helps to simply talk about how to cope with the emotional and financial impact of being laid off. The need arises for some as soon as the notice is delivered. For some, the need is acutely felt months later.

Our union will hold informational/support meetings open to all teachers on layoff. Sessions are already scheduled for EAs and will be for substitute teachers. Initially, the meetings will be held separately because of differences in contract procedures, such as recall steps.

### First Step Meetings

As soon as MPS determines when it will send layoff notices, we will provide details on the first round of teacher support meetings.

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### Talks Progressing on School Calendars

Representatives of our union and the school district have met twice to bargain the calendars for 2010-11. The third session was set for Friday, May 21, when Sharpener went to press.

Our negotiators are making every effort to reach an agreement that makes sense for our members and schools. We are working to prevent the contentiousness and confusion over calendar and banking day issues at the end of the past two school years.

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Furthermore, in a layoff situation, the contract section that limits teachers to no more than three years on leave during any seven-year span is set aside. You may take a fourth year of leave in 2010-11.

### Financial Impacts If on Leave or Layoff

If you are considering an unpaid leave or volunteering for layoff, there are financial considerations. For example, if you take an unpaid leave or if laid off (voluntarily or not), you will be responsible for paying health insurance premiums to maintain coverage, effective after September 1, 2010. The monthly rates are currently:

◆ Aetna PPO	Single: \$898.13	Family: \$1,985.46
◆ UHC HMO	Single: \$522.23	Family: \$1,370.55

*The rates will increase on July 1.*

### Safeguarding Contract Rights

Don Ernest of the MTEA staff was responsible for enforcing the contractual rights of members during the two previous teacher layoffs, in 1981 and 1982. He is watchdogging the process again this spring.

On May 3, MTEA staff representatives met with MPS central office administrators. Don explained how the contractual procedures were implemented in the past. He suggested that the district inform teachers of their options to take/extend an unpaid leave or volunteer for layoff in one communication.

Instead, MPS sent a May 4 postcard on volunteering for layoff and mailed a postcard on unpaid leaves on May 18. We see no purpose to the district's double mailing. However, we'll continue to offer ideas to the district to improve communications with members facing layoffs.

### Timetable: Rumors vs. Reality

Some public comments by high ranking MPS administrators created unrealistic expectations that layoff notices would be sent by mid-May. The district now has a **June 2 "target date"** for teacher layoff notices. Based on our union's experience with layoffs, we are taking a wait-and-see approach.

### Time Consuming Process

It will take time to accurately identify the correct teachers within the license areas MPS designates for layoff. After the district provides us with the data, we will scrutinize the seniority and certification(s) of each teacher MPS identifies for layoff to make certain the contact is followed.

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### To Honor Our Retiring Educators

The 26th Annual MTEA Retiree Recognition Dinner will take place on **Tuesday, June 1**, at the Italian Conference Center. Members who retired during 2009-10 or plan to retire at the end of this school year will be our union's guests for dinner. A brief program will recognize their years of dedicated service to MPS students.

Invitations have been mailed to *known* retirees. Unfortunately, invites were sent only to those whose retirement had been officially reported to the school board.

If you are retiring but have not received an invitation, please contact Kris Collett of the MTEA staff at collettk@weac.org or 259-1990.