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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 Team-Mate went to press, our attorneys were looking at legal actions to stop this 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 employee 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.

## MPS Laying Off 95 Paraprofessionals & 138 General Educational Assistants

On May 20, the school district mailed layoff notices to a total of 233 EA members:

- ◆ 95 Paraprofessional EAs - affecting members with a seniority date back to November 30, 2009.
- ◆ 138 General EAs - affecting members with a seniority date back to November 3, 1994.

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## 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.

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.

**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.)

## 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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### 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.

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### Union Support Meetings for Laidoff EA Members

Our union will hold informational/support meetings open to all EAs scheduled for layoff on:

◆ **Saturday, June 12, 10:00 a.m.**

◆ **Thursday, June 17, 1:00 p.m.**

More information will be in the next Team-Mate. For details/sign up, go to [mtea.org](http://mtea.org) (Events).

(Separate sessions will also be held for teachers and for substitute teachers. Initially, the meetings will be held separately because of differences in contract procedures, such as recall steps.)

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## Leaves Can Help Minimize Layoffs

To reduce the number of paraprofessionals and general EAs facing layoff, MPS is approving any leave requests of a reasonable nature.

To request a leave, you should send a letter to Bernadine Cosey, Staffing Specialist; Department of Human Resources; Milwaukee Public Schools; P.O. Box 2181; Milwaukee, WI 53201-2181. Your letter should explain the reason for your request and specify the duration - for example, the 2010-11 school year.

### Financial Impacts If on Leave (or Layoff)

If you are considering an unpaid leave or if you are laid off there are financial considerations. For example, you will be responsible for paying health insurance premiums to maintain coverage, effective 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.*

### Clarification: Laid Off Vs. Excessed

Because of some confusion in the past, we want to again note the differences between being laid off and being excessed:

◆ Being **laid off** means that you do not have a job with MPS - unless and until you are recalled from layoff. Your health and other benefits will not continue if you are laid off (unless you can pay the premiums out of pocket).

◆ **Excessing** means only that you will not have a position at the same school. Your health and other insurance coverages continue if you are identified as excessed. You should plan on returning in the fall and obtaining a new assignment at the reassignment assembly.

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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](mailto:collettk@weac.org) or 259-1990.

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## Talks Progressing on School Calendars

Representatives of our union and the school district have met three times to bargain the calendars for 2010-11. The next session is tentatively set for Wednesday, May 26.

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.