

THE ADVOCATE

Board uses teachers, students as fiscal pawns

In the past two weeks, the District has launched a direct attack on *all* members' wages and benefits. The School Board acknowledges that they have the money to stop layoffs right now. But they're telling pink slipped educators that they won't use that extra money to undo the layoffs unless all members take deep and permanent additional cuts to our pay and benefits. What the District is demanding is completely unnecessary and intentionally divisive. If we fall into this trap, *all* of us will lose, and the damages to our contract, our union, our students, our profession and all of our livelihoods will be lasting.

The first salvo was Trustee Scott Barnett's May 26 press conference demanding that SDEA freeze step and column movement on our pay schedules and give up our fairly negotiated raises that are still two years out. The assault continued at the ongoing layoff impacts and effects bargaining session, as the District passed across the table an illegal bargaining proposal. That proposal asked that *all members* take a **third year of furlough days, give up our contingency language** triggered by improvements to the District's finances, and

defer our fairly negotiated pay raises into the 2013-2014 school year or beyond (illegally extending beyond the three-year term of our contract). In exchange for these massive and long-reaching cuts, the District offered to extend laid off members' benefits in the short term and *possibly* restore some jobs "in line with the Board priorities."

Led by Barnett and School Board President Richard Barrera, the Board followed up their bargaining proposal with a June 2 vote to formally tie any layoff recalls in their budget to a demand that all of the unions in the District agree to open our contracts and give even deeper cuts to our wages and benefits than we already have.

The Board is no longer even pretending these layoffs are driven by a fiscal crisis; these layoffs are driven by the District's desire to divide our union and get more take-backs. Here are the facts:

- The District has been sitting on enough money to avoid layoffs all along.
- With the May Revise, the District has \$50 million more even

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Barnett, Rosen play politics with our children's futures

Several weeks ago the *Union-Tribune's* opinion section featured three pieces regarding San Diego Unified's current financial state—three pieces, but only two perspectives, and all three from politicians far away from the classroom. In response, I submitted my own perspective, that of a teacher regarding what is one of the most pressing issues we all face: how to ensure that our children receive the education they deserve. As they generally do with responses from SDEA regarding educational issues, the *U-T* chose not to publish my article, so I will share it with you here.

No one can deny that public schools in California have faced some of their most challenging years recently. The economy of our state has struggled at the same time that federal standardized testing requirements have grown stiffer. Districts across the state have been forced to do more with less, slashing extra-curricular programs, increasing class sizes, decreasing crucial student support services such as nursing and counseling, and asking employees to shoulder the burden in the form of pay cuts and healthcare concessions. In our District, the San Diego Education Association and other employee unions made significant contract concessions in form of furlough days that have reduced wages and increases to our healthcare copays. We are willingly doing our part to share the District's financial burden and ensure that our students are the funding priority.

Letters in Solidarity

Bill Freeman
SDEA President



But for politicians like current School Board member Scott Barnett and unsuccessful School Board candidate Stephen Rosen, employees' concessions can never be enough. In their editorials, both paid lip service to the hard work of our District's educators, but then called for us to give permanent concessions in wages and benefits to solve a short-term problem. Their rhetoric matches the unfortunate tenor of many recent conversations about education at the national level, blaming classroom teachers for the problems of our public schools while ignoring the very real and very complicated challenges facing today's children outside of the classroom walls. Even more disturbing is the willingness of these two politicians who claim to be

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Encanto members, supporters march on Ed. Ctr.

The extended evaluation cycle of up to five years that union members finally won this year is under threat at Encanto Elementary, but teachers aren't taking it lying down.

At the outset of the school year, Encanto's principal announced that she wouldn't allow extended evaluation cycles for any employees, even if they met the eligibility criteria. The principal indicated that her decision was influenced by her personal philosophy about how often teachers should be evaluated.

Blanket denials like those of Encanto's principal are a violation of extended evaluation cycle rights, which say that extended evaluation cycles must be mutually agreed upon by the evaluator and evaluatee. Blanket denials don't give the evaluator and evaluatee and opportunity to dialogue and attempt to reach agreement.

Union members at Encanto initiated a grievance on these grounds, and SDUSD agreed that the contract was violated. The problem now is that SDUSD won't fairly remedy the grievance. Even though the rights of over 25 Encanto members were violated, SDUSD proposes to "fix" the problem for fewer than 10. The "fix" would require this small group of members to individually argue their case for an extended evaluation cycle before a panel of three administrators *who do not know the educators or their work!*

Encanto members said this "fix" is a bad idea, and in April SDEA members from Encanto and



(L-R, back to front) Sevanne Quinn (Encanto), Eleanor Evans (Millennial Tech), Kisha Borden (Zamorano El.), Marc Capitelli (Webster El.), Kandi Nieto (Preschool), Margaret Hernandez (Encanto), Marion Snell (Kimbrough El.) Connie Gearhart (Clark Middle), Mary Laiuppa (Cherokee Point El.), Lynn Howard (Encanto).

across SDUSD marched on SDUSD Education Center offices to deliver a petition signed by over 150 SDEA members demanding a fair solution. The crowd of SDEA members purposefully walking through the corridors of the Educator Center turned heads and caused commotion.

Administrators continue to refuse a fair solution and are forcing the grievance to arbitration. The primary hold-outs are Deputy Superintendent Nellie Meyer, Assistant Area Superintendent Shirley Wilson, and Labor Relations Specialist Pam Tipp.

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fiscally responsible to offer a plan to fix the District's financial woes *one day* before the Governor's May revise budget was released, which in fact painted a far rosier picture for our District to the tune of nearly \$50 million. What kind of fiscal hawk calls for tens of millions of dollars in employee concessions just twenty-four hours before learning that the District will in fact be receiving those same tens of millions of dollars from the state?

It is tempting to contest line-by-line the factual inaccuracies in both pieces (e.g. Rosen's assertion that teachers get 16 weeks of paid vacation, when in fact we get no paid vacation or holidays at all and are only paid for exactly the number of days that we work; Barnett's offer of recalling layoffs now in exchange for giving up pay increases years down the road, proving that the District is indeed sitting on more money right now than they currently need to operate). But the broader point is this. Ask yourself: Would you advise your own child to become a teacher right now?

As a Teacher of the Year, it is deeply distressing

to me to watch the attacks on the profession I love discourage more and more young people from pursuing this rewarding and vital path. Teachers today face longer hours, less pay, less job security, worse benefits for ourselves and our families, and the decreased ability to retire with stability and dignity. Who do we as a society want to teach our children? A revolving door of young idealists who burn out within five years and leave for careers that bring greater wages and more respect? Or a dedicated, stable core of professionals who dedicate our entire working lives to educating young people and building America's future?

The truth is that our District has the money to recall all 800 remaining laid off educators, keep class sizes low, honor their fairly negotiated contracts with all employee organizations, and offer our students the world-class education they deserve—just as they have for the past three years despite crying wolf every time. SDUSD doesn't have a funding crisis. The District has a priority crisis. It is time for our elected leaders to do the right thing, for our students and for our future.

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Layoff: Board puts kids last

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without tax extensions. Districts across the state from Fresno to Chula Vista are using that extra money to recall layoffs, as the Governor is directing.

- Instead, Barrera and Barnett are leading our Board in doing the opposite, demanding even more cuts than they were before.
- The District is holding 800 members hostage to extract more cuts they don't need from all of us.
- This means that the District is willing to allow class sizes to swell needlessly unless they get the unjustifiable contract concessions they are after.
- No matter how much their finances improve, the District has used excuse after changing excuse to justify their layoff decision. As each obstacle is removed, they invent a new one — first the County, then the credit market, then the state budget, and now the need for the District to budget three years into the future (based on numbers that will be literally unknowable for years).

Layoffs and cuts are less necessary than they have ever been. The District needs to do the right thing NOW. That means recalling every layoff with no strings attached, and honoring the contract they fairly negotiated with us just one year ago. If your AR has not already called a union meeting, contact him or her to learn about the companion piece to this month's Advocate, involving a direct action demanding that the Board stop using our members and our students as fiscal pawns, and do the right thing right now.

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