

January 22, 2004

Letters to the editor  
*The Republican*  
P. O. Box 2350  
Springfield, MA 01102-2350

Dear Editor:

This letter is in reference to the article entitled "No-raises view stirs doubts" that appeared in *The Republican* on Tuesday, January 13, 2004. The article accurately reported many of the positions taken by the Springfield Education Association, but there were some omissions that should be brought to the attention of the public.

The School Department budget is different than other city departments. Only 10 percent of our budget is city money; the rest is state and federal money and revenue from various grants. The 10 percent from the city is the minimum amount the city must contribute under state law.

Because Springfield is one of the most challenging districts for teachers to work, the School Department cannot fill many of the current positions with highly qualified licensed teachers. Also, teachers are the only city workers that are required by the state to earn a Master's degree. Teachers receive no reimbursement for the courses they take and the compensation they receive, once they have earned an advanced degree, pales in comparison to the compensation the workers on the city side receive for advanced degrees under the Quinn Bill. No other city departments would have a problem filling positions with qualified workers, if their budget allowed for additional hiring.

As opportunities present themselves, talented, highly qualified, licensed teachers are leaving the Springfield Public Schools and opting to move to other districts where they feel they will be more appreciated, supported and respected. Because this is the fifth year of Retirement*Plus* for teachers in the commonwealth, those opportunities will be ever increasing.

Nearly all workers on the city side received raises last year. Teachers did not.

The former mayor and school committee extended the Superintendent's and the administrators' contracts but refused to extend the teachers' contract. The only administrative positions that have been cut have been administrators in the schools. The number of non-school based administrators has grown.

I, again, call on the new Mayor and School Committee to go over the School Department budget with a fine-tooth comb and make cuts in areas that do not affect direct services to children such as numerous consultants, conferences, and travel expenses. This money could then be used to bring a fair and just resolution to the collective bargaining crisis. Failure to do so further diminishes the School Department's ability to attract and maintain licensed, highly qualified teachers for the children of this city.

Sincerely,

Timothy T. Collins  
President

cml/editor 1/22/04