

October 23, 2003

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

Dear Editor:

I am disappointed in the press/media coverage of the financial crisis in the city of Springfield. Over and over again, in all segments of the press/media, the number of police and firefighters who have lost their jobs has been reported. The number of teachers who have lost their jobs has never been accurately reported.

Over the last two years, the Springfield Public Schools have lost at least 190 teaching positions and 132 teachers actually lost their jobs. The student enrollment has continued to grow. Teachers are into their second year without a Contract and no raises. During this same time, federal, state and local regulations have required more and more from teachers, and teachers have answered the call for the children of this city.

The Mayor, through the implementation of state statute 656, has denied all city workers their raises, including their contractual step raises. He has also denied movement on the salary schedule for teachers who receive advanced education degrees. Teachers are the only municipal workers who are required by the state to earn a Master's degree. They receive no reimbursement for the cost of earning their degrees and the compensation they receive for these degrees pales in comparison as to how police are compensated by the city for equivalent degrees.

Last June, the School Committee and the Mayor extended the Superintendent's contract. The School Committee and the Mayor also extended the administrators (Unit B) contract (which expired the same time as the teachers' contract) until a new settlement is reached. Springfield teachers have a bargained and signed *Letter of Agreement* from the School Committee to extend their contract but the Mayor and the School Committee have refused to vote to honor this *Letter of Agreement*.

Springfield teachers deserve to be treated with the same respect that the Mayor and the School Committee have shown the Superintendent and the Unit B administrators. The Mayor and School Committee have a responsibility to honor the commitment that they made at the bargaining table. The extension of the teachers' contract is a no cost issue for the city in terms of dollars. The failure of the Mayor and the School Committee to extend the teachers' contract will have a major cost in terms of teachers' morale and labor harmony in this city.

I urge all Springfield citizens to tell their elected officials to honor the commitments they have made-- extend the teachers' contract and bargain in good faith. To continue to do otherwise denies the hardworking teachers of the city their dignity and the respect they deserve.

Sincerely,

Timothy T. Collins
President

