

Press Release

The SEA has just completed its first ever vote of no confidence of a superintendent of the Springfield Public Schools. Not even during the strike in 1980 did the leadership of the SEA call for such a vote.

On September 14, 2005, the leadership of the SEA presented the following Bill of Indictment to the membership for their consideration before the vote.

Bill of Indictment

Why Such a Vote...Why Now?

- **This vote is being conducted, at this time, as a result of a decision made by the SEA Legislative Board at its August 29 meeting.**
- **The SEA L-Board believes that Superintendent Burke has failed to provide the leadership necessary to guide the Springfield school system through the current crisis and re-build it as a great system for our students and a system where teachers' commitment and expertise is valued and rewarded.**
- **Indeed, the SEA L-Board believes that Superintendent Burke has been a divisive figure – indefensibly promoting divisions among new and veteran teachers, as well as between and among teachers in different disciplines – and has contributed to the creation of a culture of disrespect toward teachers within the school department administration and the Finance Control Board.**
- **In the midst of this crisis, Dr. Burke has been singularly disingenuous and dishonest, by promoting radical and un-tested ideas for Springfield's students, schools and teachers, *while actively pursuing superintendent jobs elsewhere!***
- **The SEA L-Board believes that, if Dr. Burke is so eager to leave Springfield, he should cease his promotion of these radical and dangerous ideas and *resign now.***
- **The SEA L-Board believes that a vote of 'No Confidence', by SEA members, will deliver a powerful message of unity and resolve, as well as our determination to be active, equal partners in the re-building of Springfield's schools with a different, trustworthy, visionary and *committed* new superintendent.**
- **The SEA L-Board believes that a vote of 'No Confidence' in Dr. Burke has the potential to shift the dynamics of negotiations for a new contract in a positive direction.**

In particular, Joe Burke:

- **Has failed to create a culture of achievement for students**
- **Has failed as an advocate for Springfield's students, schools and educators - in our community, among local elected officials, our legislative delegation and the leadership of the state legislature**
- **Has failed to build a culture of collaboration and partnership with Springfield's educators; instead, he has created an administrative culture and practice – from the Superintendent level on down – that is more distant from and unresponsive to school staff, that is more *command* than *collaborative***
- **Has promoted significant reductions in *instructional time*, by continually adding new, mandatory assessments – without reducing existing assessments**
- **Has, as a result of this intransigence and his and the FCB's refusal to pay negotiated wage increases or release budgeted money for negotiated step increases and lane changes, presided over the largest exodus of experienced, highly qualified educators in the history of Springfield's schools**

The results of the vote are as follows:

- 2,008 of the 2,451 members voted (82%).
- 1,926 members indicated they had no confidence, which is 96% of those voting.
- 82 members voted indicating they have confidence, which is 4% of those voting.

The following are issues of concern for SEA members that were not part of the Bill of Indictment because we did not, at that time, have the data from the Springfield Public Schools:

- Over 15% of the teaching staff is new to the Springfield Public Schools due to the largest exodus of licensed, highly-qualified teachers in a single year in the history of the Springfield Public Schools.
- Of the 359 new teachers we have received data on, 71.6% are **not** licensed or deemed highly qualified by the Federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act (aka No Child Left Behind). The federal law calls for 100% of teachers in a school district to be highly qualified by June of 2006.
- Well over 90% of the newly hired Special Education teachers are not licensed and will not be considered highly qualified.
- The SEA's proposal for a trained mentor for every new teacher has not been implemented. Our proposal follows the laws and regulations of the Commonwealth that require every school district to provide mentors.