

SEA **Action Update**

Major action planned:

Educators, supporters to pack City Council to urge resolution to safeguard school funds

Mark your calendars for Jan. 24 and plan to join hundreds of your SEA colleagues and supporters at City Hall at 7 p.m.

Our plan is to fill the Council chambers with hundreds of SEA members and community supporters and to present testimony on the effects of the budget crisis on our kids and our schools

Our goal is to use the testimony and the petitions we have been circulating in the schools to move the Council to pass a resolution calling on the Financial Control Board to keep their hands off the Schools budget – to preserve the money for our negotiated step

increases and lane changes and to stop the fiscal assault on our schools; also, to urge the Council to lobby our legislators to work to provide Springfield with the state assistance it needs and deserves.

YOU can help make this action a success by:

1. Attending the City Council Meeting on Jan. 24.
2. Signing and circulating the Petitions at your school.
3. Asking family members, friends and neighbors to sign the community Petition to the City Council.

Show you care – *be there!*

Member survey seeks basic info to share with community, media

Take the SEA on-line member survey, which began Jan. 13. The information collected will be shared with teachers, the community, and will also be used in our media campaign.

Our goal is to collect a significant amount of information on the effects of the budget crisis on SEA members, our kids and our schools. We hope to capture the details of the increased pressures on our members and our schools, including escalating out-of-pocket expenditures on basic classroom necessities, declining morale and the alarming number of members who are

contemplating leaving our schools as a result of the crisis.

YOU can help make this survey a success by:

1. Going online at www.seateachers.com/survey and completing the survey. It should take about 5-10 minutes.
2. Encourage every one of your colleagues to do the survey.

Your participation in the survey is essential to its accuracy and usefulness!

Getting involved: Things to do *Now!*

- **Action Pledge Cards:** Fill out one of these Cards – commit to helping the Campaign succeed, in any way you can!
- **City Council Petitions:** Sign the Petition. Circulate a Petition among your colleagues. Take a Community Petition home for family, friends and neighbors to sign. **Return Petitions by designated due date.**

About this newsletter ...

SEA Action Alert will be a regular publication of the Communications Committee of the SEA Strategic Action Campaign. Our purpose is to provide up-to-date information on Campaign actions and activities and to encourage increasing membership participation in the Campaign.

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Legal update:

Case in Superior Court:

- Charging that, in FY 2004, Chapter 656 was improperly invoked when the city declared a wage freeze across all departments, thus denying educators salary schedule lane and column movement. **Status:** In active discovery, with MTA attorney Sandra Quinn having deposed or intending to depose the city's superintendent of schools, mayor, chief financial officer and others.

Unfair labor practice complaints:

- Charging the employer with violating Chapter 150E, the collective bargaining law by unilaterally hiking health insurance costs for city employees, and by contacting employees about these hikes, while bargaining was continuing over this issue. **Status:** Filed by MTA attorney Ira Fader and pending at the Massachusetts Labor Relations Commission.
- Contesting the wage freeze, which has continued under the Control Board and contending that the situation falls under Chapter 150E and that the employer has an obligation to bargain.

Status: Pending before the MLRC.

In three formal complaints issued by the MLRC in November, the commission found probable cause to believe that the Springfield School Committee violated Chapter 150E by the following:

- Regressive bargaining, by making an economic proposal at the bargaining table in October 2002 and then withdrawing part of the proposal during bargaining sessions in June and September 2003;
- Regressively bargaining, for reaching a tentative agreement with the SEA in May 2003 to extend the collective bargaining agreement and then, in June 2003, making that agreement contingent on the union's acceptance of a mail order prescription drug program for members, including increased health insurance co-pays;
- Unilaterally implementing the above mentioned drug program with its increased co-pays; and
- Breaching its duty to support a tentative agreement to extend the contract.

Status: The MLRC has issued complaints and will hold hearings on the cases in the future.

Strategic Action Committees update:

- **Member Organizing** is working on increasing the number of Building Action Teams (BATs) and providing support to the BATs
- **Community/Organizing and Outreach** has been developing a list of community groups, business and civic leaders and others with whom we will be arranging meetings to discuss the schools crisis and our Campaign. We will be seeking their active support for our Campaign, including attendance at the Jan. 24 City Council action, lobbying of state legislators and statements of support in the media.
- **Communications** currently consists of two working groups: (1) one group is working on internal communications, including this Campaign Action Update and the Web site; (2) the second group is working on the broader media campaign, including preparing media outreach for the Jan. 24 City Council action. Overall, they will be working on telling our stories to the public and getting the facts about our work, our schools and our Campaign to the media and the public.
- **Political Action** is working on arranging meetings with members of our state legislative delegation. We will be meeting with our legislators over the next few weeks, to lay out our Campaign and our goal of securing additional state money for the Springfield schools and to getting commitments from them, to actively support our goals in the state legislature.

Getting involved ...

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- **Become and Action Organizer:** Organize or join a Building Action Team (BAT) at your school. Help educate and activate 5-10 colleagues, as part of the Campaign.
- **Join one of the Strategic Campaign Committees:** There are four Campaign Action Committees that plan and implement Campaign actions and activities. They are: Member Organizing, Communications, Community Organizing/Outreach and Political Action.