

RTA news -- January 27, 2009

1. 403 B (annuities) -- 2009 federal changes that were to take affect now has been extended to change 12/31/09. However, RCSD has decided to implement the changes now. Some providers who have only a few clients have decided not to continue with 401 B's. You may hear this from your provider if it concerns you.

Another new change is that any borrowing or transfers of funds must be signed off by the employer. If you are borrowing money from your annuities, make sure you have enough time to get this signature. (Someone using the money for a house closing was told by CO that they did not have enough time for the paperwork.)

Martha Keating and John Pavone said that they would be working up a memorandum with CO to send to all employees. Watch for that.

Nominations and elections -- In the January Rochester Teacher newspaper was a form for officer nominations. You can use that or make a copy. Deadline is Feb 6 for written nominations. Nominations will be taken during the March Rep meeting.

Don't forget to update your address to get ballots for the election in April/May. You would know if RTA has your correct address if you are receiving NYSUT/AFT materials at your home.

1-866-327-8670 -- This is the phone number for the US Capitol operator to connect you with your congress person. NYSUT is asking you to call and have him/her vote for H.R. Bill #1 which is the massive infusion of money into education. It will be important for newer teacher in keeping jobs in the big cities.

There were 800 teachers receiving PAR (Personnel Activity Report) forms. Everyone is asked to return the sign off sheet each month because the Federal Government could pull \$154 million if the district does not get 100% compliance. This is a result of the federal audit.

Rochester Teacher Academy has put workshops recently on AVATAR and more will be going on the system.

6. Vote Cope -- teachers need to contribute to help lobbying for school districts. Please contribute \$2 per paycheck to help. Some issues that Albany lobbyists are lobbying against: Tier 5 for new employees who will pay 3% into the pension plan for all their career (Vote Cope helped to get rid of that after 10 years of service for Tier 3 and 4); not being able to retire until 62; the governor and state legislators can change the pension benefits and are talking about doing that; all districts are talking about cuts and higher class size, mayoral control of the school board, the city taking away \$11 million designated to go to the district kept by the city, etc.
7. Special Ed advisory committee is meeting Thursday, Jan. 29th at RTA at 4. If interested, all are welcome.
8. Brizard announced today that the deficit for next year is \$61 million; yesterday it was \$53 million. The superintendent, as in the past, reacts to the governor's first proposed budget by stating the deficit. However, the legislators ususally give more money to districts. It is a tactic

for negotiations so that union leadership, teachers, and community might lower expectations. The district translates that into 500 jobs. But Urbanski said that only results in \$25 million. He says that they will stay on top of it, giving suggestions of how the district can save money. RTA supports sister unions RAP and BENTE and will not suggest laying off anyone from their union, though RTA will push for cuts farther away from the classroom.

Urbanski said that he can envision hires in some areas, but layoffs in others. He calls for everyone to not turn on each other and be supportive during negotiations.

There will be meetings for giving your ideas for negotiations: Elementary meetings at East High Forum Room, Feb 9 from 4 to 6; Secondary meetings, Feb 11 3 to 5. You can also send in your survey.

Jacqueline Polito is CO's chief negotiator. She is an attorney and has been an RCSD employee for 2 weeks. Brizard said he will be in and out of the district and Urbanski sees that negotiations will be going on for a long time because every suggestion will have to be taken back to him. (another stalling tactic)

Urbanski, Keating and Pavone are the RTA chief negotiators. When dealing with specific concerns, there may be others called in who are experts in that area.

RTA hopes to have their proposal package given to the reps at the March meeting. The reps will go to extra meetings to be kept abreast of the situation.

9. Urbanski said that the RTA dinner seminars are going well. They are listed in the RTA newspaper.
10. Retirement -- If there is a state incentive it usually comes at the end of the budget process, possibly in April, if lucky. RTA gave the district their local proposal (seen in the RTA newspaper). Brizard took it and said will look it over.
11. Staggered elementary times for next year was brought up, but Martha Keating said that they don't know much about it. They will get back when they know more.
12. For retirees, the district will pay only for the Basic Blue Cross/Blue Shield program. Any other program the retiree must pay the difference. If you have questions, RTA has the rates.