



Washington Teachers' Union

AFT Local No. 6, AFL-CIO

For Immediate Release

April 13, 2010

Contact:

Monique LeNoir

Communications Director

Washington Teachers' Union

Phone: 202/293-8620

E-mail: mlenoir@wtulocal6.org

STATEMENT BY GEORGE PARKER, PRESIDENT, WASHINGTON TEACHERS' UNION, ON NEW INFORMATION ABOUT THE FIRING OF 266 TEACHERS

Under questioning from D.C. Council members, Chancellor Michelle Rhee claimed her decision to lay off 266 teachers last fall was based on faulty information from the Office of the Chief Financial Officer.

WASHINGTON—The Washington Teachers' Union (WTU) and members of the Council of the District of Columbia today learned that 266 teachers and other staff were terminated, and students' classes and lives disrupted, for a budget crisis that did not exist.

The WTU challenged the existence of a budget crisis at the time Chancellor Michelle Rhee ordered the reduction in force (RIF). That challenge was the basis for the union's filing of a request for a preliminary injunction to halt the terminations. In her opinion denying that request, the judge relied upon what we now know to be materially incorrect information provided to her by a representative of the D.C. Public Schools (DCPS) system.

To put it simply, this is unacceptable.

We once again request that DCPS reinstate the teachers who were laid off. If the teachers are not reinstated, the WTU requests a new hearing on the RIF, at which time the newly available budget information will be provided to the court.

We also are requesting that the D.C. city council take legislative action to ensure greater transparency in the budget process. In particular, we would like to see more rigorous guidelines for determining what does—and does not—constitute a crisis that allows for unregulated actions like October's RIF.

The WTU calls for a close review of the unilateral powers currently accorded the chancellor and the mayor, to determine if more must be done to ensure that there is greater accountability, both to the council and to the people of the District of Columbia.

Nothing can give back to the teachers, the students and the community what was lost as a result of either malevolence or mismanagement of the budget. We must, however, take all necessary steps to ensure that it does not happen again.

###

1825 K Street, NW, Suite 1050
Washington, DC 20036