



Washington Teachers' Union

WTU RIF Update #2

WTU Members, Leaders, Parent Testify at Nov. 5 Preliminary Injunction Hearing

Five witnesses for the Washington Teachers' Union (WTU)—including a teacher, guidance counselor, PTA president, union representative and WTU president—gave compelling testimony at the Nov. 5 preliminary injunction hearing on the disruption in D.C. public schools and classrooms following the layoffs of 266 DCPS teachers.

D.C. Superior Court Judge Judith Bartnoff will issue a written decision sometime next week on whether to grant an injunction to reinstate teachers while the union arbitrates its class-action mass discharge grievance against D.C. Public Schools (DCPS). The grievance challenges the so-called reduction in force (RIF) as a mass firing of teachers and staff in violation of the collective bargaining agreement.

"We are so proud of our members—especially those who testified—for the way they have come together to stand against this act of disrespect and disregard for our students, our schools and for the democratic values we all hold dear," says WTU President George Parker. "Regardless of the outcome of this one phase of our fight for justice, we must continue to stand together."

Testifying at the Nov. 5 hearing were: Maurice Asuquo, a former special education teacher at Sharpe Health; Emyrtle Bennett, a former guidance counselor from Coolidge High School; Gwendolyn Griffin, president of D.C. Congress of PTA; and Mary Collins, WTU field representative. Asuquo, one of the only blind teachers in DCPS, told the judge that his principal assigned him to teach a visual arts class. Bennett, who also had been a counselor at Sidwell Friends and Chicago Latin, testified about her high outstanding record of helping seniors get accepted into college and secure scholarship funds. Collins provided information on how DCPS budgeted for the RIF in a way that suggested school officials knew in advance that more experienced teachers would be fired. Griffin explained why the PTA opposes the RIF and supports reinstating the teachers.

"This hearing represents just one battlefield in our fight to restore respect for education, for students and for teachers," Parker says. "We are standing for what's right. We are working for what is best for the students we serve and for what is good and just for teachers."

For more information on the WTU response to the RIF and to read the WTU RIF Update #1 Q&A, visit our Web site at www.wtulocal6.org or the WTU blog at <http://wtulocal6.blogspot.com>.

Working for what's good for kids and fair to teachers.

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