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NESHAMINY TEACHERS TO STRIKE MONDAY CITING SCHOOL BOARD'S REFUSAL TO COMPROMISE

Outstanding Contract Issues Include Protecting Teacher Voice in Education Quality & Board's Rejection of Massive Financial Concessions

LANGHORNE, PA (January 6, 2012) — After nearly four years of negotiations and six contract proposals which produced little progress, Neshaminy teachers announced today they will strike on Monday morning, January 9. The decision comes more than two months after the teachers' last proposal on November 1, 2011, which offered millions of dollars in health care, retirement and salary concessions.

As with all the teachers' previous proposals, the Neshaminy School Board refused to enter into discussions that would lead to a reasonable compromise.

Key among the many outstanding contract issues is the Board's attempt to gut contract provisions that for many years have given the community's teachers an equal voice in school quality and improvement. These provisions have allowed teachers to maintain smaller class sizes and ensure special education students get the resources they need.

"We don't want to go on strike, but the Board has left us no choice," said Louise Boyd, president of the NFT, which represents the district's 654 teachers. "A strike is the only way for us to bring pressure on the Board. We have tried every other way. Our students and staff can't afford to wait any longer. It's long past time for this Board to work with us towards a compromise."

Calling Board threats of property tax hikes and program cuts "regrettable scare tactics," Boyd said the teachers' latest proposal—developed with help from an expert in school district budgeting and financial analysis—can be realized with minimal budget impact.

Boyd noted the NFT's proposal would save the District millions of dollars through changes to the teachers' health care plan, prescription medicine coverage, and retiree health benefits. After a nearly four-year salary freeze, teachers have also offered to forgo millions of dollars in salary

increases, in addition to their willingness to shoulder much higher health care costs, Boyd said. Teachers with families will pay about \$2,000 more per year for health care and prescription coverage under the teachers' latest proposal.

"The District has far more financial flexibility to reach a fair agreement with us than the Board admits," Boyd said. She noted, even as far back as 2008, a state fact finder recommended modest salary increases. She also said an analysis presented to the School Board on October 23, 2011 demonstrates that the Board has significantly overestimated future pension costs, and has transferred millions more than needed into a fund for building repairs which have gone largely unused. Customarily, such expenditures are covered through long-term financing.

Teachers have shown again and again that we are willing to make real sacrifices to reach a final agreement and finish this," Boyd said.

"This is our community too. We know times are tough, and we want to safeguard the future of our schools," Boyd added. "We have offered financial sacrifices again and again. The one area where we will not compromise is in protecting our ability under our contract to stand up for what's good for our students."

Boyd said, "Teachers are willing to go back to the table, but the Board must demonstrate a real commitment to compromise." Boyd continued, "Teachers want a settlement. This community wants a settlement. We urge the Board to stop its stonewalling and attacks on teachers. They need to come together with us to work out a contract that is good for children and fair to teachers and taxpayers."

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