

# Membership Insider

A monthly publication of the United Teachers of Wichita

Special Edition , March 2010

## LAYOFFS? Maybe

- **Will Wichita Public Schools have to make cuts?**

Probably. It depends upon the Kansas Legislature. If they refuse to increase the state's revenues, then they will probably have to cut education funding. That means cuts in Wichita. USD 259 has already lost about \$34 million in revenue. If we have to make more cuts, it will be painful.

- **If Wichita does have to make cuts, will teachers be laid off?**

Maybe. UTW leaders have made it clear that cuts should be based on least impact on students and classrooms. The district has told us they will try to use attrition (retirements, etc.) to cut the budget as much as possible. It is still possible that they will have to reduce the number of teachers even further than that. Article 18, Reduction & Recall, deals with layoffs.

- **Overview of Article: Reduction & Recall**

The Reduction and Recall article deals with layoffs of the teaching force. If a teacher is laid off using this process, that layoff is not considered a termination or non-renewal. In other words, that teacher is not fired, just laid off. It still means that teacher would not be teaching the next year and not drawing a paycheck.

- **How do they decide who gets laid off?**

The article says that the district will identify groups of teachers for reduction. But it also says that the greatest possible reduction shall happen through attrition. That would mean that, as much as possible, they would not fill vacant positions created by retirement teachers leaving the district.

- **What kind of groups are likely to be identified?**

It could be anything – any curriculum area, grade level, or any kind of group. In our discussions with downtown, the most likely groups will be big groups. For example, all elementary or middle school or high school teachers. They would then say that they need to reduce the group by a certain number of positions.

- **Who within the groups would get laid off first?**

Article 18 says teachers shall be selected in the following order: (a) Teachers whose positions

have been eliminated and who are not qualified to fill any vacant teaching position; (b) Probationary teachers; (c) Nonprobationary teachers who are on a disciplinary Plan of Assistance.

- **Is it possible that a veteran teacher would lose their job, while a probationary teacher stays?**

UTW believes that a non-probationary teacher who is on the list to be laid off has the legal right to bump a probationary teacher who is in a position that the veteran teacher is qualified to hold. For that reason, it is likely that the district wants to avoid the scenario of ‘bumping.’ They might be able to accomplish that by identifying very large groups, thus reducing the chance that a non-probationary teacher would lose their job while a probationary teacher keeps theirs.

- **Is that fair to the new teachers?**

No. However, the process is designed to avoid allowing administration to simply pick and choose who they want to keep and who they want to get rid of during these budget cuts. Length of employment in the district is very important in the selection process of layoffs.

- **Can I draw unemployment if I am laid off?**

Yes.

- **Can I get my job back in the future if I am laid off?**

There is a Recall section in Article 18. The problem is education funding might not be fixed in the short term. It could easily be tough for a couple of years.

- **Normally, the BOE has to notify a teacher by May 1 if they are going to be non-renewed. Do these layoffs have to be done by May 1 also?**

No. The layoffs in Article 18 are not considered to be non-renewals or terminations and are not subject to the Continuing Contract law and the May 1 deadline. The layoffs could be done at any time.

- **Is there any way to avoid all of this?**

Yes. The Kansas Legislature could decide to increase the state revenues. However, they need persuading if this is to happen. We all need to be contacting our legislators, frequently. You can go to the UTW web site, [www.utw-ks.org](http://www.utw-ks.org), and click on the link ‘Contacting Your Legislator.’ You will find several documents about the funding issue and how to contact your legislator.

**No decisions regarding layoffs have been made yet. UTW will continue to meet with management and will do everything possible to protect teachers. Help out by contacting your legislators!**