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Mat-Su Education Association Begins Strike Vote

PALMER- This morning, the Mat-Su Education Association (MSEA) began a strike vote of all MSBSD employees covered by the MSEA collective bargaining agreement, a result of the Mat-Su School Board's refusal to return to the bargaining table.

"We've been going back and forth for 18 months," said Dianne K. Shibe, President of the Mat-Su Education Association, "We're so incredibly close to reaching an agreement, but the School Board won't come back to the table and finish the job."

A strike vote does not mean that a strike must take place. If the Mat-Su School Board returns to the table and can reach an agreement with the MSEA bargaining team, a strike can be avoided. This vote is a legal requirement which must be completed before an actual strike can take place. The MSEA must give the MSBSD 72-hours' notice before a strike takes place.

"Every single member I've spoken to would rather have a fair contract than go out on strike, but they are prepared to strike if the Board won't come back and negotiate," said Shibe. "We have made concessions, bargained in good faith, and have remained ready to put this behind us. It is now completely on the School Board to do their jobs and settle this contract."

Shibe also condemned the MSBSD's use of District resources to send bargaining information directly to families earlier today. "The email the District sent today is counterproductive, unnecessary, and damaging to our goal of settling this contract. If they really want to put this behind us, as we do, then they would talk to our bargaining team rather than just tell one side of the story to our families."

"Our teachers, psychologists, nurses, and everyone else working without a contract in the middle of this pandemic simply want to be respected and valued by the School Board," said Shibe. "Settling this contract without a strike is our top priority so that we can continue educating our students."

The strike vote will be conducted from September 15 to September 18. All certified employees of the MSBSD are eligible to participate. Election results will be counted and certified by the Anchorage League of Women Voters, a neutral third party, next week.

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