

# Bargaining Update: meA & MESPA

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## “Worst Case” Finances

**Revenue Problems.** MEA and MESPA Meet-and-Confer Committees met with Janice Ramirez, Garrick Monroe, and other district administrators yesterday, May 11, for an update on budget projections for next school year. It is not a pretty picture. At this point the district is anticipating deep revenue cuts by the Arizona Legislature, based on state budget proposals now being considered at the Capitol.

The state already cut Mesa’s budget by almost \$10 million for the current fiscal year. Those cuts could remain as the starting point additional cuts for 2009-10. On top of possible state reductions, the district is also dealing with a \$10.8 million loss due to reduction in student enrollment in Mesa.

District budget planners acknowledge that little is known at this point about the state’s use of federal Stimulus dollars and how that could impact the state funding. Nor is it clear how the district may use increased federal money which will come directly to the district. The bottom line: we still don’t know what we have to work with for the next contract year

**Staff Cuts.** In the meantime the district has initiated massive cuts to next year’s budget – mainly by reducing teachers and staff. For example, the reduction in teacher contract allocations is projected to save over \$8 million. Dr. Ramirez has announced that a substantial number of elementary teachers will be recalled from the RIF list within a few days because vacancies have opened up.

We still don’t have firm figures on the total number of classified employees who could be cut – or the number who could be reduced from full-time positions to part-time.

**Compensation.** No decisions have been made regarding salaries and wages for next year. One small piece of good news is that the cost of health insurance has increased by only 2.14%, the smallest increase in years. You may have noticed that the language of individual employment contracts has been revised this year to allow for several possibilities when budget and salaries are finally decided on.

**Reductions?** For now, employment contracts simply reflect your current pay: a salary freeze. The contract language and our Meet-and-Confer rules allow for an increase in pay if a sufficient amount of new funding becomes available. But the language also allows for an across-the-board reduction in pay if revenue cuts make that necessary. Another possibility is to impose one or more unpaid “furlough” days for all employees. We have been assured that all of these options will be brought to the Meet-and-Confer process before final decisions are made.

**Is this necessary?** It’s a fact that Arizona is facing the worst recession since the Great Depression. And it’s a fact that Mesa Public Schools lost 2,300 students this year. So the budget crisis is real and unavoidable. We believe, however, that state political leaders could do a much better job putting federal Stimulus dollars to work and overhauling Arizona’s deficient tax system. Lack of political leadership has made the crisis worse.

*On the Back: Join AEA’s June “Heat Wave” at the Capitol*



It's a ...

# HEAT WAVE

## AEA at the Capitol - June 2009

We will be on the Legislature until they come up with an acceptable budget!

AEA members will be at the Capitol every business day through June.

For East Valley members – our days are **Tuesdays: June 2, 9, 16, 23, and 30.**

### Here's what you do:

- Sign up for a specific day or days.
- Come to the Capitol at 11:00 a.m. on your designated day.
- Attend an AEA briefing at a designated place (we'll tell you where).
- Remain for hearings, demonstrations, or one-on-one contacts.
- Be finished by around 1:30 p.m. most days.

### Sign up with your Association Rep

### Keep the heat on the Legislature!

You may also call the MEA/MESPA Office at 480-833-8400  
Tell us which day in June that you would like to be at the Capitol