UPDATE: Teacher Strike/Negotiation Status (October 1, 2021)

On September 29, 2021, the District rejected the RVEA's request for voluntary non-binding arbitration. As stated in a prior status update, the District has already presented its Best and Final Offer and the arbitration process will not change its offer. Therefore, voluntarily agreeing to go through arbitration would be a willful waste of taxpayer money. While it is true that if the RVEA decides to continue its teacher strike through October 19, 2021 the District will be required to go to non-binding arbitration, in such a situation the Commonwealth pays half of the cost of arbitration. The Commonwealth will not pay anything if the District proceeds with voluntary arbitration.

While the District rejected the RVEA's request, it offered the RVEA a two-part alternative which would (1) end the RVEA's strike immediately; (2) ensure there will be no other strikes during this school year; and (3) allow the community to issue a binding decision on the RVEA contract. The District first requested that the RVEA put the District's Best and Final Offer to a ratification vote. To date, the Association has been unwilling to allow its members to vote on the District's Best and Final Offer. If the ratification vote is successful, the strike would end immediately. In the event the ratification vote is unsuccessful, the District requests that the RVEA agree to allow the community to decide the outcome of the RVEA contract by virtue of a Spring 2022 binding referendum. The community's input in something both sides should want and not look for ways to avoid. The District believes a ballot question is the best way to get the community's answer.

On September 30, 2021, the Association's UniServ Representative Patrick Andrekovich notified the District that the Association rejected the District's request and opted instead to continue its strike. Notably, with its rejection of the District's request, the Association continues to be unwilling to allow its members to vote on the District's Best and Final Offer. Mr. Andrekovich did not provide any explanation as to why the RVEA would not allow a vote.

The RVEA also rejected the District's request to allow community involvement through a referendum. In its response, the Association appears to suggest that the referendum proposal in not permissible under Act 88. There is nothing in Act 88 which prohibits the parties from agreeing to have a referendum regarding the RVEA contract. While the District cannot unilaterally force a referendum, the parties can mutually agree to it. The RVEA also stated it could not agree to the referendum proposal because the parties are required to follow all procedural mandates set forth under Act 88. Yet, when the RVEA requested voluntary non-binding arbitration, it specially asked the District to disregard some Act 88 procedural mandates. More specifically, the RVEA requested that the District agree to keep the Best and Final Offers of the parties private and to exclude the public from the process, which is contrary to the mandates of Act 88. The RVEA has not provided any explanation as to why it wants to exclude the public from the process.

The District would like to remind the community that the RVEA can choose to end its strike immediately without any action by the District. Act 88 does not prohibit the RVEA from ending its strike prior to October 19, 2021. The choice is solely up to the RVEA. As it stands, the District has presented the RVEA with options to end the strike immediately. The RVEA has rejected the District's request and has chosen to extend its strike, presumably through October 19, 2021. The District is hopeful that the RVEA will reconsider the District's proposal and (1) put the District's Best and Final Offer to a ratification vote; and (2) if the ratification vote fails, agree to end the strike immediately and let the community decide the contract issues via referendum. The District would welcome an opportunity to meet with the RVEA without representation to discuss why our offer should be acceptable.

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