

Resolution 52

GOVERNOR CORBETT AND MAYOR NUTTER'S ATTACK ON PHILADELPHIA PUBLIC EDUCATION AND PUBLIC SERVICES

THOSE WHO WORK IN PHILADELPHIA PUBLIC SCHOOLS, represented by the Philadelphia Federation of Teachers, and those who provide the city's vital public services, represented by AFSCME District Councils 33 and 47, do so out of a sense of mission: they want to help kids, they want to care for those who are most vulnerable, and they want to ensure that the vital public services that keep our city moving are reliably provided to build a better Philadelphia for all.

But educators and public employees are under attack from forces intent on rolling back the promise of equal opportunity, basic fairness and responsive government.

Governor Corbett and his legislative partisans are leading the attack. While extending \$2.4 billion in tax breaks to corporate special interests and political donors, including expanded favors for energy and telecommunications companies, Corbett eliminated assistance to 69,000 financially distressed Pennsylvanians suffering from illness, disability or domestic violence; cut environmental funding by 20 percent and slashed more than \$1 billion from public education, including more than \$304 million from Philadelphia's schools.

Right now, Governor Corbett is holding hostage \$45 million in federal assistance targeted for Philadelphia schools. Holding back the money is part of his plan to boost his sagging poll numbers by manufacturing a crisis in which schools are starved, children are denied the education they deserve and teachers are blamed for the disruption.

Instead of standing up to Corbett and demanding the federal funds Philadelphia schools were promised and desperately need, Mayor Michael Nutter has joined Corbett in scapegoating hardworking public employees and educators, while continuing tax breaks for large corporations.

And even though Philadelphia teachers have offered substantial contract concessions by forgoing pay increases and making changes to health care benefits, the mayor dismisses these concessions and continues his push to eliminate the ability of educators to speak up for public schools and fight for the things students need—like a safe and welcoming school to attend, with a rich curriculum and extracurricular activities, where teachers have the support they need in order to improve their instruction and students receive the services they need in order to be ready to learn.

When Mayor Nutter wanted the support of city workers, he said he would work to negotiate a fair contract for public employees and improve public services for all Philadelphians. AFSCME District Councils 33 and 47 have demonstrated flexibility in working with the city, but the mayor has not kept his word. Instead, Nutter has focused on advancing the Corbett agenda, attacking public employees, cutting services and granting tax breaks to big corporations.

City workers in Philadelphia have now gone five years without contracts or wage increases, have paid significant increases for their health care and suffered relentless attacks from Mayor Nutter's administration. Under Mayor Nutter, the number of city workers living in poverty has doubled.

While both AFSCME DC 33 and DC 47 have attempted to negotiate a solution with the Nutter administration, he has gone to the Pennsylvania Supreme Court to impose a contract that means cuts to vital services, wages reductions and less retirement security.

Mayor Nutter's failed policies have cut vital services to the residents of our city. Because of his failures, library doors often remain locked and fewer people work in our recreation centers. It's time for Nutter to change course, stop putting the Corbett agenda and the interests of large corporations ahead of the interests of the people of Philadelphia, and negotiate a fair contract for educators and municipal workers.

The labor movement stands with neighbors, parents, students and community leaders in condemning these attacks on the schools and the vital services on which our city relies. We are united in calling on Mayor Nutter to reverse course and stand up for a better Philadelphia for all by:

1. Demanding the immediate release of the \$45 million in federal assistance targeted for Philadelphia.

2. Instructing the mayor's representatives on the School Reform Commission to demand the funding necessary for our schools to educate students, and shelve further plans for school closings, budget cuts and giveaways to market-based reformers.
3. Working with parents, teachers, students and community leaders to put politics aside, fix the damage already inflicted, raise additional revenues by eliminating unnecessary tax breaks for wealthy corporations, collect taxes which are overdue, and do what's right for Philadelphia children, families and public schools.
4. Immediately working with the City Council to identify and raise additional revenues in the form of fair-share assessments on wealthy tax-exempt Philadelphia institutions, such as the University of Pennsylvania.
5. Collaborating with teachers and city municipal employees to find fair solutions through good faith negotiations rather than using this manufactured fiscal crisis or the courts to attack collective bargaining and dismantle vital public services.