
Letter: Del Norte needs a fair contract with its teachers

November 2, 2019

I would like to encourage the Del Norte County Unified School District's Board of Trustees to direct the district's administration to seek a fair and equitable bargaining agreement with the Del Norte Teachers Association.

I believe this is in the school district's long-term interests for the following reasons:

1. The district does have a teacher recruitment and retention problem. This problem is in part a reflection of the statewide teacher shortage. Last school year, 90% of all rural districts in California reported problems filling teaching positions. This is compounded locally by the simple fact that Del Norte teacher pay is 9.2% less than the state average.
2. The district is currently fully funded by the state. It is experiencing increasing student enrollment and it received a 3.26% COLA this year. In addition, the district's unrestricted reserve is five times the required level. All of which would indicate that the district can afford a fair and equitable settlement.
3. If the district is truly in danger of being in deficit in their budget calculations in two years, then the school board should be asking why. Perhaps there should be a review of the budgeting process – a review that looks to increase our competitive edge to recruit and retain highly qualified teachers in a highly competitive job market.

I believe it is financially possible for the district to reach a fair settlement with the DNTA. I also believe that it is in the district's best long-term interest to do so. Teachers continue to do what they always do, teach our kids, even though they are feeling undervalued by our school board and are struggling to maintain their standard of living.

John Murphy

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