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## Legislators need to properly fund schools

*IRIS SALTERS*

It's a simple message, but one you're likely to hear a lot more of in the coming months: Enough is enough.

It means exactly what it says.

Enough of our Legislature refusing to make education a priority in Michigan. Enough of the lack of courage to look for balanced solutions to our state's budget crisis. Enough of the political game playing with our students' futures.

Hundreds of Michigan public school employees marched to the Capitol to deliver that message last week. Thousands more will join parents and community leaders to shout it loud and clear from across Michigan on May 24. And even more will join together at the Capitol for a statewide rally on June 24.

We do this because the only way to ensure students have a bright future is to secure stable, equitable and adequate funding for Michigan's public schools. We do this because we cannot stand by and allow our legislators to abandon a generation of children by denying them the educational opportunities they deserve. We do this because decades of cuts have taken their toll on our schools, yet the only answer our lawmakers seem to be able to come up with is to further slash resources for public education.

The time has come to say: Enough is enough.

But for some, enough is never enough when it comes to trying to balance the budget on the backs of those who dedicate their lives to educate and nurture students. We are willing to do our part. School employees across Michigan have saved this state almost a billion dollars in the past three years by taking pay cuts and freezes and paying more for shrinking health care benefits.

But funding our children's education cannot be achieved by gimmicks and quick fixes that do not address the underlying funding crisis facing public education in Michigan.

Now it's time for our legislators to do their part.

MEA members have written and delivered more than 100,000 postcards to lawmakers and the governor. They wrote of missed opportunities to reach students, important programs being eliminated and class sizes growing because of layoffs. They wrote of their passion for their chosen careers and their dismay at the Legislature's failure to invest in public education.

In a little over two months, schools across Michigan will be required to have their budgets in place. If history is any indication, they will have no idea how much funding on which to base those budgets because the Legislature doesn't have to have its budget settled until October. Already some districts are bracing for severe cuts, given the political climate in Lansing.

And that's why our message is so critical right now, while there is still time to change the tide.

It's time to invest in our students, our schools and our future.

It's time to say enough is enough.

*Iris Salters is president of the Michigan Education Association, a union that represents teachers and education support staff.*

## Additional Facts

### **Labor Voices**

Labor Voices columns are written on a rotating basis by United Auto Workers President Ron Gettelfinger, Teamster President James Hoffa, Michigan AFL-CIO President Mark Gaffney and Michigan Education Association President Iris Salters. Look for Labor Voices every Wednesday in The Detroit News.

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