

The logo for Teton Education Association, featuring the text "TEACh!" in a bold, green, sans-serif font.

**Teton
Education
Association**

President: Angela Hoopes
Vice President: Susan Christensen
Secretary: Amy Sotin-Wood
Treasurer: Lisie Smith

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TEA Negotiator: Brent Schindler, (989)-327-5919 or bwschindler1@gmail.com

Attorney: James Piotrowski, (208)-331-9200
Email: james@idunionlaw.com

Teton Education Association Sues School District, Requests Mediator for 2020-21 Contract

Driggs, Idaho—On Wednesday, July 7, the Teton Education Association filed a formal legal complaint against Teton School District 401 and the five members of the elected School Board of Trustees for violating their duty to negotiate in good faith, as defined by Idaho Statute 33-1272. Separately, TEA has requested mediation for the 2020-21 master agreement. The district has not yet responded to this request.

“The students in our community deserve consistency in the workforce that helps them learn and grow on a daily basis, but the district’s actions continue to jeopardize retention rates among our dedicated professional educators,” said TEA President Angela Hoopes. “We are a border community that frequently loses educators to better paying jobs in Wyoming, and the Teton School District’s tactics can only lead to more turnover among staff, which ultimately is detrimental to students.”

The formal complaint spells out the Teton School District’s refusal to bargain in good faith, in particular their refusal to reallocate funds released by the state when it reversed a five percent holdback that had been instituted at the peak of the COVID-19 public health crisis. The Teton School District appears to be the only one in Eastern Idaho that has refused to reallocate these funds that are critical to staff compensation and student services.

TEA has made multiple attempts to collectively bargain for these funds, which represent compensation they should have already received. “At each negotiation meeting, we have come with a fair and reasonable proposal that has simply been rejected by the board,” said TEA negotiations team member and Teton High School teacher Brent Schindler. “The board has offered no other alternatives to work with us, and we are at a standstill.”

As a result of this stalemate, TEA has requested a mediator to work with both TEA and the board in order to complete the negotiations process for the 2020-21 monies. The TEA requested using a mediator from the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service because it is a free service offered through the federal government. In addition, TEA and the District need to start the negotiations process for the 2021-22 master contract, which the Board refuses to do until the 2020-21 salary issue is resolved.

“We would have been happy to consider any proposal,” said negotiations team member and Teton High School teacher Lisie Smith. “Teton educators went above and beyond the call of duty during the difficult times of the COVID-19 pandemic. Idaho’s booming economy and an influx of federal COVID-19 relief funds leave the District with funds that are more than sufficient to address this personnel crisis, but they have elected not to do so.”

For more information, please contact Brent Schindler at (989)-327-5919 or bwschindler1@gmail.com or James Piotrowski at (208)-331-9200 or james@idunionlaw.com.