

Good evening, Chairman Tonelson, school board members, Superintendent Jones, ladies and gentlemen. My name is Marian Flickinger. I am President of the Norfolk Federation of Teachers, AFT Local 4261. The Federation represents more than 2000 school employees who are employed by Norfolk Public Schools.

It is once again time for us to begin our collective begging process. Once again we are faced with a bleak financial forecast for our state, our locality and our schools. The first thing the Federation recommends doing is building a coalition which includes the Federation, school board members, EAN, community members, the PTA, and NPS administrators. We need to pull together and make a plan. The plan should include town hall meetings which ask the public what they think the answer is to finding the funding needed to fix our buildings and pay school employees a decent wage for the services they render. Every year the Federation is the largest group represented at hearings. Every year the Federation does postcard campaigns and demonstrations to bring attention to the needs of our schools. The Federation has been a force in getting things done. Imagine what we might be able to do if all of us joined hands and worked collectively to find solutions to our financial woes. I want to let you know the Federation will do our part this year as we have done year in and year out. Will you help us get the community informed and involved? That's what it will take to find solutions to our financial woes. We have to all stand up and be counted to get things done.

Teachers and classified employees are working harder than ever and received no pay raises this year. Teachers are underpaid and our classified employees are underpaid. The district paid \$100,000 plus to find out that our classified employees were paid under market. That was nearly five years ago. The district still has not brought them up to market. Veteran teachers have been short-changed for the past two years. It is upsetting when we see certain administrative employees getting as much as \$10,000 raises this school year because they were reclassified and our teachers and hourly-waged classified employees received nothing. NPS keeps preaching "All means all". Does this just apply to children? We are disappointed in the inequity we see. NPS told employees there would be no increases in health care costs this year. That was not true. Some employees received significant increases in their co-pays. In other words NPS did not keep its word to employees.

Money does not solve all problems, but lack of it surely intensifies them. Employees continue to watch their food bills, their gas bills and electric bills go higher and higher. They have received a pay cut because their bills are rising and their pay is not.

NPS could do some things for employees that do not cost you a cent. Have early dismissal on every day prior to a holiday and allow employees to leave after the children are dismissed. It would be a way of showing employees that you appreciate the fact that they are still doing their jobs well, even in these difficult times. You could forgive all inclement weather make-up days by using banked hours. You would actually save money on gas, electric, etc because you did not open the schools or run buses for that make-up day. There are many more possibilities, too many to mention in 3 minutes.

The bottom line – we need to stand on our heads and spit wooden nickels if that is what it takes to get our state and our community to make funding for our schools their number one priority. I am practicing my head stands – I hope you will, too. Thank you.

