Portland school teachers reach tentative contract

Portland Public Schools (PPS) and its teachers union announced tentative agreement on a new contract Feb. 13, nine days after the district declared that bargaining had reached an impasse.

Portland Association of Teachers (PAT) President Rebecca Levison said she couldn't disclose details of the contract until the members have a chance to vote on it. But Levison said she was pleased with the settlement. The union bargaining committee is recommending passage.

"We're hopeful that this means our members can now move forward," Levison said.

PAT's roughly 3,200 members have been working under an expired contract since July 1, 2008. Contract talks broke down over work rules, health benefit contributions, and wages. But the two sides continued to meet after making public their final offers Feb. 11, even as the 30-day cooling-off period began that might have ended with the district imposing its final offer or members going out on strike.

Rally in Olympia

The Washington State Labor Council and several of its largest affiliated unions were among several organizations to host the Protect Our Future rally Feb. 15 at the State Capitol in Olympia. A crowd estimated by the State Patrol at 6,000 people lined the steps of the Legislative Building to support tax increases to avoid devastating cuts to schools, health care, public safety and other vital services. (Photo courtesy of David Groves.)

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