

When asked to complete this, I had to think long and hard about how to proceed. This isn't about the low wages we are asked to work for or the demoralization we are asked to contend with for being "only classified" employees. This is about employees who are essentially laid off during the summer months asking to be treated as fairly as any other employee of any other industry who is commonly laid off for various amounts of time during the year. The thing about this is, though, school employees DO work for low wages and DO have to buck up under harsh criticism and also are being asked to do ever more in attempts to cut costs and budgets. These are people who work in stressful environments, for very little money, and do not make regular demands for more than the schools can afford. One of the reasons it is important to allow these employees to collect unemployment compensation ties directly into these other issues.

The first issue deals with what is right and fair. School employees pay regularly into unemployment compensation insurance. School employees are unemployed during summer break. Why should other workers be allowed to collect unemployment compensation during lay-offs that will result in employment with the same company after a break when school employees are not? That this is even a question that anyone needs to ask is appalling.

As a single working mother, it has always been important to me to provide for my child. As a school employee, I could not do that without the help of public assistance. When on a ten month pay cycle, I brought home just over \$1200 a month. Not enough to get off of food stamps, but enough to get by with the use of them. On a twelve month pay cycle, I would bring home just over \$1000 month. Think about that for a minute. The median rental rate for my county was \$709 according to figures from 2012. Fully $\frac{2}{3}$ of a paycheck would go to rent in a mid-range place. That is double what budget experts recommend someone spend on rent. That is why a ten month pay cycle was the obvious choice for a single parent, even though I was still paying well over the $\frac{1}{3}$ of my income for rent. This left me without income in the summer.

This caused me to find employment in the summer. What kind of employment is available in the summer? The tourism industry is what there is. This industry routinely only offers minimum wage to its employees. So, not only was I unemployed in the summer, if I wanted to work, it was for even less money than I made during the year. And I was competing with my own students and, eventually, my own child for work that wouldn't even pay the bills.

Thinking about it, it really doesn't make any sense to not allow school employees to claim unemployment in the summer. The majority of us are unemployed. And those who aren't are making far less than is needed to survive, let alone thrive. Giving school employees the ability to take the summer's as a time for restoration and recovery also gives us better school employees. It is time and it is fair and it is what should be done.

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