

Laid-off teachers' pay dispute

[By Ryan McCarthy/Appeal-Democrat](#)

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Teachers laid off last year in June and then rehired to teach in August received state unemployment funds during the summer, says the Yuba City Unified School District.

Craig Guensler, assistant superintendent for human resources, also said that retired teachers hired to instruct a single course receive unemployment from the state — along with full retirement pay — when they don't teach the next semester.

Substitute teachers also apply for unemployment over the winter break, Guensler said.

The unemployment pay issue arose during a meeting of a school district trustees budget committee Thursday when it was announced that Yuba City Unified faces a revenue loss of up to \$6.2 million as Sacramento reduces funds to school districts throughout the state. Closing Central Gaither School is among budget choices before the district.

Guensler said Monday that Yuba City Unified doesn't have specific figures on the costs for such unemployment compensation, which the state pays. The school district has questioned the state agency about the unemployment pay for teachers but has been told, "It's how we do it," he said.

The funds affect the state's finances but not the bottom line of the school district, Guensler added.

Patrick Joyce, spokesman for the state Employment Development Department, said Monday that the agency could not immediately comment on the compensation.

"It's pretty complicated with teachers," Joyce said. "With some other occupations it would be simpler to give answers."

Dina Luetgens, president of the Yuba City Teachers Association, said Monday the only situation she is aware of involves the teachers receiving unemployment after they were laid off in June. For instructors rehired to teach in August, "if anything were paid out, you'd be expected to pay it back," Luetgens said of state unemployment funds.

"I'm not sure there isn't a glitch in the system," she added.

Yuba City Unified eliminated more than 80 teaching positions last year, Luetgens said.

Retired teachers receiving unemployment — as well as their pension — during the semester when they're not back in the classroom "could seem to be something that bears further investigation," she said.

Yuba City Unified trustee Fred Northern said such unemployment compensation "would concern any taxpayer." Northern said of the other unemployment pay described by the district that, "there are loopholes in all things."

"Everybody needs to be treated fairly," he said.

Larry Sand, president of the statewide California Teachers Empowerment Network — which says it seeks to provide fellow educators with more information than unions give — said unemployment issues involving teachers are new because for years so few teachers were laid off.

That changed with the recession, Sand added.

Retired teachers receiving unemployment along with their retirement is wrong, said Sand, 62, who taught for almost 25 years in the Los Angeles Unified School District.

"That's really a new one," he said. "That's a scam."

Sand also questioned substitute teachers seeking unemployment during the winter break.

"It would be like a baseball player applying for unemployment in February," he said.

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