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Rudy rips teachers' pay bid amid 9/11 cri$is

By DAVID SEIFMAN and CARL CAMPANILE

The teachers union yesterday called for a whopping 23 percent salary hike over two years despite the financial fallout from the Twin Towers attacks — and Mayor Giuliani immediately slammed it as selfish and unrealistic.

The United Federation of Teachers proposed the across-the-board 22.7 percent wage increase for 80,000 instructors in a filing with federal mediators. The union has been without a contract since last November.

The increase would boost the range of salaries from a minimum of $39,154 to $85,890. Current salaries range from $31,000 to $70,000.

"This schedule will provide salaries competitive with surrounding areas, making it possible for the Board of Education to attract and retain teachers," UFT lawyers said in the 99-page proposal.

The UFT defended the salary proposal and downplayed the impact of the Sept. 11 tragedy, noting that other parts of the country recovered from natural disasters.

"The events of Sept. 11, disastrous as they proved to be, spell neither doom for the city's economy nor the public education system," the union said.

It argued that City Hall and the Board of Education have been "penny-wise and pound foolish" with funding for the school system.

But Giuliani blasted the UFT's request as greedy and insensitive, stopping just short of accusing the union of being unpatriotic in a time of crisis.

"That's just unrealistic. The city couldn't sustain it. It would do tremendous damage to the economy of the city," he said.

"I'm really surprised that this union doesn't accept that we're in an emergency and there are a lot of other people to think about."

Giuliani said such wage increases, if given to all employees, would cost the city $1.8 billion and more than double the city's projected deficit.

Mayor-elect Mike Bloomberg said he won't address labor negotiations until he becomes mayor. Schools Chancellor Harold Levy declined comment.

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