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Judge Denies Government Injunction Against Teacher Job Action Following Classroom Walkouts

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Educators at the John H. Woodson Junior High School protest school conditions (9.20.23) By. V.I. CONSORTIUM

The V.I. Superior Court has denied the government's request for a permanent restraining order against the St. Croix chapter of American Federation for Teachers, preventing them from refusing to work over what the union says are working conditions that pose a hazard to the life and health of students, teachers, and other school employees.

Soaring classroom temperatures combined with leaking pipes, flickering lights, and creeping mold are a few of the concerns expressed by both teachers and students alike. Students of at least two St. Croix high schools also led a large [group of protesters](#), after teachers had been ordered back to

the classroom.

On Friday, the matter came before Judge Douglas Brady, who had at the beginning of the week [granted](#) a temporary restraining order against the job action by teachers where they chanted about their sub-par working conditions and held placards aloft instead of reporting to their reportedly unhealthy classrooms. The complaint filed by the Department of Education's lawyers alleges that AFT STX was not legally allowed to strike under the conditions of three respective collective bargaining agreements, all of which were validly extended until the end of October.

However, AFT STX had asked the judge to [toss the government's lawsuit](#), saying that the provisions of the agreements themselves preclude going to court until the internal dispute resolution has been exhausted. Furthermore, the union argued that the contract required members to remove themselves from unhealthy working space, and thus they cannot be penalized for doing so.

Ultimately, Judge Brady agreed with the AFT STX's opinion.