



**COMING UP**

**March 1**

BOCES Lobby Day, state Capitol, Albany.

**March 1-2**

Higher Ed Lobby Day, state Capitol, Albany.



**March 2**

**NEA Read Across America day.**

Visit [www.nea.org](http://www.nea.org) for resources and ideas.

**March 3-4**

NYSUT Health & Safety Conference, Saratoga Springs.



**March 3-4**

Speak Up, Stand Up, Step Up: NYSUT conference on women's priorities, NYSUT headquarters, Latham.

**March 6-7**

NYSUT Committee of 100, state Capitol, Albany.

**March 21**

World Day to Eliminate Racial Discrimination

**March 31**

State Budget due

On the **cover**

Cover design by Dana Fournier

# Looking back ... and looking forward

**W**omen's History Month resonates with me this year on a personal level. It is my honor and privilege to be NYSUT's first woman president. I serve with deep gratitude for the pioneering women leaders who have preceded me and have done so much to make our union great. And I serve with an equally deep commitment to leave our union stronger and better for the women and men who follow in my footsteps.

Early in my presidency, I convened a group of NYSUT members dedicated to advancing women's priorities through our democratic union process. The inspired work of this ad hoc Women's Steering Committee bears fruit March 3-4 with our first-ever statewide NYSUT conference focusing on women's priorities: "Speak Up, Stand Up, Step Up!"

This conference is designed not just to educate, but also to organize and mobilize around women's priorities. It is one of the countless ways a union empowers members. In fact, if I had to sum up in one word what the union means to me, it is contained in this simple, yet powerful, concept of voice. As NYSUT's president, I am dedicated to amplifying our members' voices — making sure they are heard loud and clear in the media and in the corridors of power in Albany and Washington. As I reflect on the almost three years since my election, I know that these are some of my proudest moments:

- Establishing NYSUT as the "voice that can't be ignored." We took a change-making stand against then-Education Commissioner John King's failed approach to testing and evaluations. With fierce resolve, we "called out Cuomo" for his test-and-punish messaging and actions. As a result, working in partnership with parents, we derailed policies that were bad for students and bad for educators. By expanding our member communications, I had the opportunity to ensure members heard from me each week on our progress in these and other fights.

- Standing strong in supporting parents' rights to "opt out" of inappropriate testing — a groundswell I was proud to support and one that has since become a movement.

- Taking on the tough legal fights in a commitment to aggressively defend our members and students against threats to their rights and to quality public education. We made inroads against unacceptable gag orders, bad receivership policies and more.

- Pressing for equal treatment and equal opportunity for every member and local, regardless of ZIP code, and holding



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accountable any who would undermine those rights.

My grandmother's pioneering example as a member of the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union inspires me in this work. So, too, does the support of my family, especially my three wonderful children: Caitlyn, Max and A.J. Their constant support empowers me to be fearless — to speak truth to power, to hold individuals accountable and to take on the tough fights.

This is my passion and my avocation.

Now, I have the opportunity to carry forward the mission of the labor movement in a new role. I will be working closely with AFT President Randi Weingarten and the New York State AFL-CIO on an exciting new initiative to advance economic opportunities for women. I embrace this opportunity to carry forward at the national level the causes near and dear to my heart: advancing opportunities for women and empowering positive change through the labor movement.

It will be hard to move on from the work I love to do as NYSUT president, yet this new direction is made easier by the realization of all we have accomplished together. In deciding not to run for re-election this April, I am sustained by the knowledge that our union is stronger and more powerful than it was three years ago. Our members' voices are being heard.

I am proud of what we have accomplished together and can say with confidence that I worked every day to the best of my ability and with utmost integrity to establish NYSUT as the voice that cannot be ignored.

Today, NYSUT is, without question, a force to be reckoned with. Our members are organized, energized and mobilized for the fights ahead. I thank each and every one of you for the honor of serving as your president, and look forward to partnering with you as I take on new challenges in the days ahead.