

SRP NewsLink

A NEWSLETTER FOR NYSUT'S SCHOOL-RELATED PROFESSIONALS LOCAL LEADERS

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NYSUT President Dick Iannuzzi responds to budgetary cutbacks *'Education should not be a budgetary scapegoat'*

(Compiled from *WNY Labor Today* and nysut.org)

Members of my union — New York State United Teachers — like many Americans live through and see the magnitude of the fiscal crisis facing our Nation and our state every day.

We see it when jobs are threatened and when programs are cut.

We see it in the mood of the children and patients in our care.

And while things are starting to turn around, we know that more is still needed. Educators, school-related professionals and health care professionals have been sharing the pain brought on by this recession. Schools in New York are trying to get by with nearly \$2.3 billion less in state education aid than three years ago. The Legislature's restorations are positive steps, but they fall far short of what's needed to avoid devastating program cuts to public schools, community colleges and SUNY and CUNY campuses. Health care has endured similarly devastating cuts and is facing even more.

The new budget makes an additional \$1.2 billion cut in education spending below last year's level.

While we will continue to seek further relief at the state level through restorations and added revenues, we must redouble our efforts to be sure that as great a portion of these cuts as possible be absorbed outside the classroom.



lies to advance their own agenda and that of the privileged wealthy that have profited throughout the recession. Not so coincidentally, many on the so-called "Committee to Save New York," advocates for much of the governor's agenda, fall into that category.

Unfortunately, the governor's insistence on always linking educational performance to a meaningless and obscure statistical "34th" ranking doesn't help. I know firsthand that the governor and his staff have been made aware that education in New York has been ranked at or near the top by many well-respected and independent resources.

Education Week's Quality Counts 2011, a rigorous grading of state educational systems by one of the most respected education publications in the Nation, ranked New York second overall among 50 states; ranked our state first in two key measures of progress in

"You don't need a weatherman to know which way the wind blows."

— Bob Dylan

Likewise, you don't need a weatherman to interpret the cold wind of teacher bashing and anti-public employee sentiment. The biting chill is fed by fear mongers and ideologues that prey on the suffering of working fami-

closing the achievement gap; and gave New York an "A" in the area of standards, assessment and accountability.

NYSUT is responding through the media and in face-to-face advocacy to ensure the state Legislature has the information it needs as it deliberates the budget.

Our message is clear: What must be on the table is real shared sacrifice, on both the spending and revenue side. Public employees have been there and are willing to do more. Humiliating public workers and their unions or dismantling collective bargaining rights are not the way to turn New York's economy around and are not part of the solution.

It's time for the blustering in Albany to stop.

Everyone needs to come in from the cold winds, thaw out and work collaboratively toward the fair and equitable solutions we all need.

On the table are the future of public education and the future of New York.

You can't separate the two.

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IMPORTANT DATES

NYSUT Local President's Conference

April 6-7
New York City

NYSUT Representative Assembly

April 7-9
New York City

Administrative Professionals Day

April 27

NYSUT Professional Issues Forum on Health Care

April 30
Desmond, Albany

SRP NewsLink

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SRPs helping fight the good fight

In response to the current attacks on unions, SRPs around our nation have been very visible in showing union support in many different ways.

Their efforts have ranged from small tasks, such as simply answering a survey about union issues, or making calls to their legislators, to larger commitments, such as sending letters and faxes to their state leaders, and joining demonstrations held locally and around NYS and in Wisconsin. All of these efforts are important in showing strength and solidarity in this turbulent time for unions.

"We are proud of all the school-related professionals who join in the discussions and demonstrations — to stand in solidarity with and for our union brothers and sisters all around the USA who are in danger of losing their union rights," said NYSUT Vice President Kathleen Donahue. "This fight isn't limited to

just one state or one part of the country — the battle is on from coast-to-coast."

What we do in New York, the quality of the fight we lead, is very important. New York is still a flagship for the labor movement and for people who care about workers rights', schools, students and health care.



Kathleen Donahue

Donahue was impressed by the comments of American Federation of Teachers President Randi Weingarten in complimenting SRPs. "Teaching assistants from Wisconsin set a new level of involvement," said Donahue. "Randi said they were magnificent. We should be sure to get that message out to our SRPs."

In coming weeks, we will all have the chance to participate in events to help change the state budget, improve our local situation or show support for our co-workers across the country — when you can, join in. It's urgent.

Very important dates: Oct. 21-23 SRP Leadership Conference

Your SRP Advisory Committee has been working together with NYSUT staff at putting together a winning conference program for SRP leaders and activists who attend the SRP Leadership Conference Oct 21-23 at the Hilton in Saratoga. Several new workshops will be offered, as well as others that have been specifically requested to return by conference participants. Learning together, networking with others from your region and state, and sharing with other participants who match your job title and/or duties are just some of the benefits that you will experience at the conference. At the end of May visit www.nysut.org for conference and registration information.

Welcome new members

NYSUT would like to welcome the SRP members in the newly organized Astor Staff Association and the Astor Day Treatment Association in the Mid-Hudson region.



SRPs lining up for health and safety training

NYSUT's Health and Safety Specialist Wendy Hord has been working with SRP locals all over New York state. She recently conducted OSHA 10-hour training in the Rochester region. Participants included members of the Spencerport Transportation Association and the Fairport District Paraprofessionals. "SRPs have exposures to many hazards at work," said Hord. "It is great that so many of them are interested in finding out how to prevent those hazards and what their rights are." She will conduct another round of OSHA training in the spring for the Fairport clerical workers. She will also deliver H&S workshops on various topics at upcoming SRP conferences in the Mid-Hudson, Southern Tier, and Tarrytown regions.

SRP locals who attended the March 4-5 Health and Safety Conference included NYSUT members from the Elmira Heights Support Staff, Long Beach School Employees, Oneida School Employees United, Rondout Valley Teachers and SRPs, Syracuse TA, and the Wappingers FW. Special kudos go out to the six members of the Corning Painted Post Teaching Assistants who felt this training was so important; they paid the majority of the conference registration costs out of their own pockets. Very impressive indeed!



NYSUT LRS Albert Comfort (left), with members of the Corning Painted Post TA Joanne Bellardini, Tom Eichengreen; second row, Terri Denson, and Peggy Butler. Also present, but not pictured was local president Sherry Edger.



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A VIEW FROM THE CHAIR

Nancy Juliano

SRP Advisory Committee chair



I look forward to seeing many of you at the upcoming NYSUT Representative Assembly in NYC April 7-9. Several resolutions with a direct impact on the work of school-related professionals have been submitted by locals and will be considered by the delegates. I have high hopes that they will be received positively. Thank you in advance for encouraging your delegates to support those resolutions. Be on the lookout on the NYSUT website for information about those resolutions.

SRPs are the lowest paid members and are the most vulnerable to layoffs, privatization and budget cuts. A bad economy always impacts SRP members first and hardest. Undoubtedly we have someone in our family or our circle of friends who has already been without work for six months to a year — with no prospects of a job in the near future. We have been riding out this disastrous economic storm doing what we can to survive. And now, politicians are trying to turn America against all of us who work as public employees —not because we aren't effective, but because we belong to a great union. There doesn't seem to be any acknowledgement of the salary sacrifices we have made over the years to be able to maintain our benefits. These are very stressful times. I encourage you to stay focused; be the best you can be. Stay in contact with your local union leadership, be supportive of them, attend union meetings and pitch in when needed. Stand behind and beside each other. Stay strong. Be sure to check NYSUT's website often for updates and talking points on current topics we are dealing with in these tough times. Remember, what happens to one of us happens to all of us.

My childhood was spent on a farm. We had Banty (short for Bantum) roosters, which are small and scrappy. When I was a little girl my mom always called me a Banty because I was very scrawny and always fighting for my rights, recognition and appreciation as the third daughter. Being a Banty was good training ground for my life as an SRP. I am still small and scrappy, always ready to advocate for the rights of my brothers and sisters.

This is my last article as Chair of the SRP Advisory Committee as I am at the end of my term. It has been my distinct honor and privilege to serve as chair of this important committee. I am grateful for the opportunity. Although I will no longer be the chair of this committee, I will continue to fight the good fight. You can count on me to still be walking the walk and talking the talk. You can count on me to still speak up and speak out. You can count on me to be flexible — bending like a willow — but I'll not break. You can count on me to be there right beside you!

RAP Toy Drive a success

The Rochester Association of Paraprofessionals holiday toy drive for the Golisano Children's Hospital was a great success! RAP members generous contributions resulted in a trunk full of toys and games, which were delivered to the Golisano Children's Hospital and allowed many hospitalized children to smile during the holidays.

The hospital's thank you note to RAP read: "With deep appreciation, we thank you for supporting this hospital. Your generosity will bring comfort to and help entertain the children that frequent our hospital while putting smiles on their faces and for this we are very grateful. Here at Golisano Children's

Hospital we are fortunate to experience two of life's greatest privileges — taking care of children and working with dedicated partners in the community."

Congratulations RAP for bringing holiday joy to the children and for fostering a partnership with a worthy sector of your community.

If your local has sponsored community initiatives such as the one above, *SRP NewsLink* would love to share the story



Maryann Tychoniewicz, RAP member, packing the car full of donated gifts.

with others. Please email information and photos to Margaret MacCartney at mmaccart@nysutmail.org.

NYSUT's ERS consultant program in action

By: Glenn Lucas, NYSUT ERS consultant, Capital District region

A very frustrated NYSUT member contacted me in January 2010 after every effort to resolve her dilemma had been ignored, mishandled or just not handled at all.

Here was a woman who was restored to Tier I from Tier 3 in the NYSERS in 2000 without any reimbursement toward her retirement and was told she wasn't entitled to any. When her job changed from teacher aide to teaching assistant, she asked to be transferred to the NYSTRS. She was then told there was no record of her enrollment in Tier I (she had delivered all her paperwork to NYSERS four times previously). No matter what department she contacted all she kept being told was there was no record of her change or her calls went unanswered.

After two very bad falls at work and subsequent surgery because of them, she was forced to retire in 2007. She retired on total disability, but her calls and submitted, completed forms again were mishandled in the state systems.

When her case was finally brought to my attention at NYSUT, I was able to get her the correct forms as well as the appointments she needed to file her retirement papers properly. Shortly thereafter she received her retirement checks.

It took her two very difficult years, but she finally is receiving what is

rightfully hers. Being able to have helped this member after all of her frustration is very satisfying and rewarding to me.

Several NYSUT Regional offices offer the services of a NYSUT ERS consultant. These consultants give general information about ERS benefits and plans, give in-person or phone consultations, and provide workshops for groups of 10 or more. They do not do calculations or make recommendations regarding a member's choice of options. For further information, contact Margaret MacCartney at NYSUT headquarters at mmaccart@nysutmail.org.

National Health Care Reform

Are you confused about health care reform and how it will affect you? If so, visit www.kff.org/health_reform/Health-Reform-Explained-Video.cfm to watch an animated video, *Health Care Reform Hits Main Street*. This video, prepared by the Kaiser Family Foundation, summarizes the legislation in nine minutes. Whatever your politics, it is entertaining as well as informative. To learn more, explore their website.

Appreciation for what matters



NYSUT members Dennis Flamenbaum, president of RC 23, and Annie McClintock, president of the United Teaching Assistants of Harborfields, welcome words of appreciation from Congressman Tim Bishop (center). Bishop hosted a thank you reception at the IBEW Local 25 Union Hall. More than 200 unionists who helped with his reelection heard him praise the hard work and effort they put into supporting him. Bishop said, "Good faith matters, hard work matters, commitment matters, effort matters and participation matters."

Health insurance coverage for adult children to age 26

The federal Affordable Care Act requires employer sponsored plans which offer dependent coverage for health insurance to make coverage available to adult children to age 26. This coverage is effective the first health insurance renewal date after September 23, 2010. A special 30-day open enrollment period must be held. Enrollment materials should be obtained from your employer. Most health plans for NYSUT locals renew either in January or July 2011.

Under this new federal law, no additional amount other than the regular

family cost sharing (if any) is required. This is unlike the New York state, "young adult coverage to age 29" coverage, which passed in 2009 and requires the payment of a COBRA-like premium.

Important considerations:

- Adult children can be covered to age 26 regardless of student status, financial dependence, marital status or residence.
- Separate plans for dental, vision or only retirees are excluded.

- Employers may have the option to exclude adult children who work and are eligible for coverage through another employer.
- The value of employer-provided health coverage for adult children to age 26 is excluded from a worker's taxable income.

If you have questions concerning this provision, please contact your human resources department.

Legal assistance is there when you need it

Sooner or later everyone will need legal assistance, whether it concerns a house closing, document review, separation or divorce, or estate planning.

The Legal Service Plan, endorsed by NYSUT Member Benefits Trust, will be there when you need help with personal legal matters.

For a modest annual fee of \$85 for in-service members and \$55 for retiree members, (fees are reduced by \$5 if paid through payroll or pension deduction), the plan

provides unlimited toll-free advice and an after-hours emergency hotline; letter writing and phone calls made on your behalf; two, hour-long office consultations; a simple will, durable power of attorney, living will and health care proxy; review of legal documents up to six pages in length; advice and assistance with identity theft, debt consolidation and mortgage foreclosure issues; and the *Preventive Law Guide* consumer-friendly newsletter.

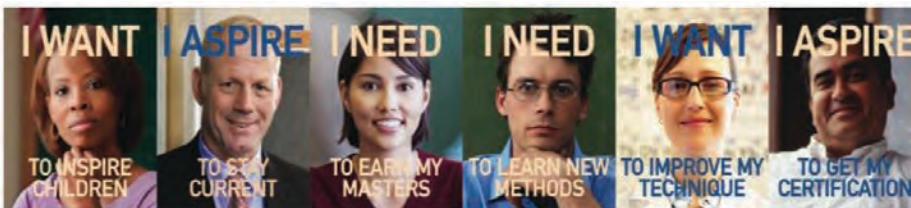
If you encounter a problem that can't be resolved by letter or phone, you will be referred to a plan attorney in your geographic area.

Attorneys provide legal representation at reasonable costs, either the plan hourly rate of \$200 or 40 percent less than their standard hourly rate, whichever is lower. In addition, the plan offers guaranteed discounts on major legal services and guaranteed maximum fees for many personal legal matters.

Optional riders for elder law and business protection can be added to your plan to provide legal assistance in these specialized areas.

For more information, call NYSUT Member Benefits at 800-626-8101 or visit www.memberbenefits.nysut.org and click on Legal Services – Members in the left-hand navigation bar on the home page.

For information about contractual endorsement arrangements with providers of endorsed programs, please contact NYSUT Member Benefits. Agency fee payers to NYSUT are eligible to participate in NYSUT Member Benefits-endorsed programs.



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