

NYSUT UNITED

A UNION OF PROFESSIONALS

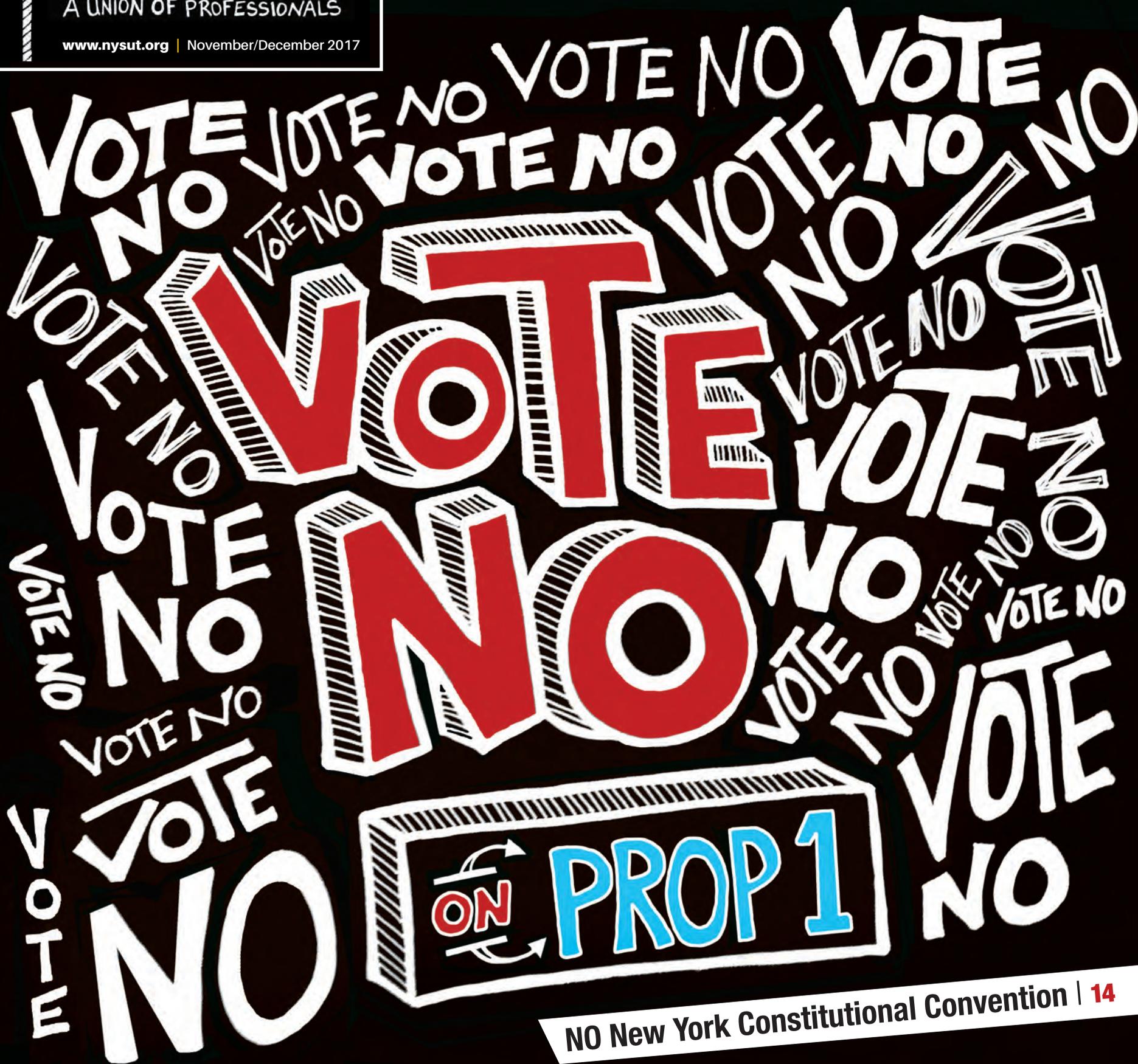
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New additions to our online publications catalog

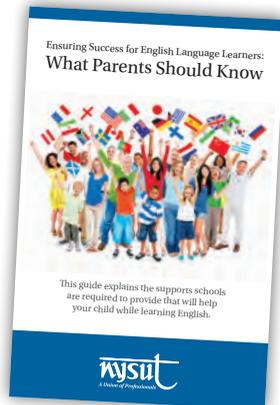
Several brochures — free to members in limited quantities and/or to download — have been updated and added to our new online publications catalog at www.nysut.org/publications:

- *10 things to remember when preparing for a Parent-Teacher conference* offers practical do's and don'ts from veteran educators, and information about the NYSUT Education & Learning Trust's two-hour session to help teachers plan for a productive parent-teacher conference.

- *What you need to know about protecting yourself* addresses the many situations where employees can become vulnerable. The guide offers suggestions about ways to ensure your professional and personal safety.

- *What every NYSUT member should know* is especially helpful for members who are new to the NYSUT family. Although much of the guide discusses issues pertaining to K-12 teachers, other members will find plenty of useful information. The guide is available only for download.

- *Ensuring Success for English Language Learners: What Parents Should Know* is a useful guide for parents. It explains the supports schools are required to provide to children who are learning English as a New Language. A Spanish language version is also available.



Planning a field trip? There might be a grant for you

The Connect Kids to Parks Field Trip Grant Program will refund up to \$1,000 of field trip costs for student visits to a New York State park, nature center or historic site, or a Department of Environmental Conservation Environmental Education Center or fish hatchery. Pre-K-12 Title 1 schools and any public school in a district with a Title 1 school (including school-sponsored clubs), Advantage After School Programs, 21st Century Community Learning Centers, and youth bureaus in communities with Title 1 schools can apply. Each class or group is eligible for one transportation grant per academic year. For info, visit <https://parks.ny.gov/environment/connect-kids/grant-program.aspx>.

NYS marks centennial of women's suffrage



Women in New York State secured the right to vote in 1917, three years before the 19th amendment granted that right to women across the United States. The state marks its 100th anniversary of women's suffrage on Nov. 6. The milestone offers educators the opportunity to engage

students in learning about the suffrage movement and exploring themes such as civic engagement, the democratic process and equal rights.

Information about centennial events across the state and other resources from the New York State Women's Suffrage Commission are available at www.ny.gov/programs/new-york-state-womens-suffrage-commission. You can also access information about women involved in the state's suffrage movement at the National Women's Hall of Fame website, www.womenofthehall.org. The hall of fame is located in Seneca Falls.

Free lessons on free speech

As protests by NFL players highlight, the right to free speech is a hotly debated topic, one many citizens might not fully understand. The Bill of Rights Institute, a non-profit educational organization that develops educational resources and programs about our country's founding principles, offers a long list of free lessons for educators to use in the classroom. Visit www.billofrightsinstitute.org.

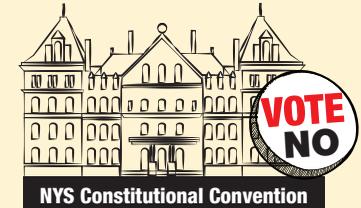
The website also features a lot of other useful materials, including student essay contests, debate webinars and information about its Constitutional Academy and Leadership Symposium.



COMING UP

Nov. 6
100th anniversary of women's suffrage in New York State

Nov. 7
Election Day — Time to **Vote NO!** on a state constitutional convention



Nov. 11
Veterans Day

Nov. 13
American Education Week begins

Nov. 13-14
NYS Board of Regents meets, Albany

Nov. 17
Substitute Educators Day

Nov. 17-18
NYSUT Board of Directors meet, headquarters, Latham

Nov. 21
NYS SRP Recognition Day

Nov. 25
International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women

Dec. 1
World AIDS Day

Dec. 7
Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day

Dec. 10
Human Rights Day

Dec. 11-12
NYS Board of Regents meets, Albany

On the cover

Cover illustration by Dana Fournier



■ The Empire State VI leaves its berth at SUNY Maritime College to help hurricane victims. The ship carried more than \$30,000 worth of supplies to Puerto Rico and now serves as a floating hotel for emergency workers in San Juan.



PHOTOS PROVIDED

■ Aida Diaz, center, president of the Asociación de Maestros de Puerto Rico, receives much-needed supplies delivered by the Empire State VI.

En solidaridad

Unions rush to Puerto Rico's aid after devastation

By Liza Frenette
lfrenett@nysutmail.org

Ships pass in the night and airplanes crisscross the skies in a determined quest to bring Puerto Rico back from the ravages of Hurricane Maria. Some bring fresh water, supplies and personnel; some leave with families and students coming to the mainland to relocate and attend school.

Recovery will take years. Most of the island is still without electricity, and will be for months. With their homes leveled, people scramble for shelter. Many are sickened by disease, dehydration and hunger. Union members nationwide, statewide and locally are responding to the catastrophe without hesitation.

Emergency room nurse Bitá Mehrjou and visiting nurse Alicia Schwartz, both members of the United Federation of Teachers/Federation of Nurses, spent weeks in Puerto Rico as part of a national team of volunteer health care professionals from the American Federation of Teachers.

Mehrjou told a CNN reporter that her team found a woman trapped on an upper floor of an assisted living facility who had not eaten in three days. They

cared for an older woman with a gangrenous foot who was bedridden and dehydrated. Her family could not get her an ambulance.

The nurses also met with a colon cancer patient who had been unable to receive chemotherapy for three weeks, Mehrjou said. Another family lacked access to the medication needed to control the violent behavior of a relative, so they were keeping him locked in a room.

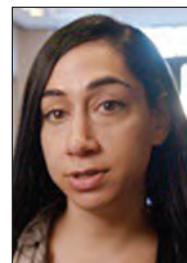
"People are scared," Schwartz said. "They're not sure what to do."

Margarita Montes, the 95-year-old grandmother of NYSUT legislative staff member Alithia Rodriguez-Rolon, lives in Luquillo on Puerto Rico's northeast coast. No one heard from her for three weeks after Hurricane Maria hit. When Montes finally gained access to a phone, she told her family she was okay and her concrete house was spared, but one of her two generators was stolen and her vegetable garden was wiped out.

"She lives off the land; bananas, fruits and vegetables," said Rodriguez-Rolon. "People who



Schwartz



Mehrjou

used to live off the land can't anymore."

Without electricity and water, school must wait for most Puerto Rican children. Many school buildings are in shambles. Though some reopened weeks after the storm, they serve only as connection points for communities.

The Asociación de Maestros de Puerto Rico, led by Aida Diaz, has been working tirelessly since the hurricane to help members and students recover and to help schools reopen.

"We have students who can't sleep," Díaz told *Education Week*. "We have students who see rain and start crying. We have to work with all of them." Many of her members lost their homes, she said.

The AFT, which welcomed the union representing the island's 40,000 teachers into its ranks this summer, has an intense disaster relief campaign underway for Puerto Rico, sending supplies and volunteers to help. AFT President Randi Weingarten traveled there in October. NYSUT, through the generosity of its members, local unions and staff, has sent \$50,000 in direct relief to the island.

Meanwhile, New York education officials expect some 200,000 children from the island will arrive to attend school here.

Though the city has not seen enrollments increase significantly yet, some students from Puerto Rico are already in classes at the School of Science and Applied Learning, a pre-K-5 school in the Bronx, and in other New York City schools where UFT educators are helping them adjust.

Both the city and state education departments issued guidance to schools highlighting programs and protections for students displaced by hurricanes Harvey, Irma and Maria. Resources include the McKinney-Vento Act for students in temporary housing; extensions for providing proof of immu-

“We have students who see rain and start crying.”

— AIDA DIAZ

nization records and health requirements; registration exceptions for unaccompanied youth; free meals and guidance for English language learners. The state’s Board of Regents also took action to allow displaced teachers to obtain temporary non-renewable teaching certification to teach here.

“We have not had an influx of Puerto Rican students yet, but our current students report that their families in Puerto Rico are reeling,” said Patrice Delehanty, English as a New Language teacher

and member of Shenendehowa TA in Saratoga County. “We are in the midst of planning fundraisers in order to send money and supplies there.”

The State University of New York, meanwhile, revised residency guidelines at its campuses for in-state tuition rates to include undergrad and graduate students from Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands for this academic year.

Members of United University Professions, NYSUT’s affiliate at SUNY, are part of the crew from the SUNY Maritime College aboard Empire State VI. The 565-foot ship was dispatched to San Juan to provide housing, power, food and water to 650 first responders and relief workers. It was first activated for a 30-day mission to Texas to help Hurricane Harvey victims, but was sent to Florida instead to help with the pressing needs from Hurricane Irma. Ten days later, it left for Puerto Rico.

UUPers Dominic Valvo, Edward Madigan, Matt Mahanna, Ron Sigemann and James Carlucci are the mates and engineers dealing with power lines, tides, meteorology and oceanography on the ship, said SUNY Maritime chapter president Barbara Warkentine.

“It’s a hardship to leave on a moment’s notice,” she said of the UUP responders. “But when they call us, we muster.” Warkentine said the campus takes great pride in the ship and its ability to provide vital help. On this trip, Empire State VI carried more than \$30,000 worth of water and supplies donated by New Yorkers through Empire State Relief and Recovery Efforts. All were distributed.

Your help is needed

Members of the Mohonasen TA, led by Maria Pacheco, holding sign, below, rallied on short notice and packed food, diapers, wipes, batteries and flashlights to fill some of the 27 suitcases bound for Puerto Rico. The TA is now collecting money for solar chargers.



The effort is just one of many. “This is what unions do. We stand together and work collectively for the good of our members and the good of our communities,” said NYSUT President Andy Pallotta. “New York educators are giving generously and saying to their colleagues in Puerto Rico, ‘We are with you.’”

NYSUT has so far sent \$50,000 in disaster relief to the island. A statewide donation drive for supplies for Puerto Rico is planned for early November.

You can do your part. Donate online at www.nysut.org/disasterrelief. Or, make your check payable to NYSUT Disaster Relief Fund and mail to: NYSUT Headquarters, Attn: Disaster Relief, 800 Troy-Schenectady Road, Latham, NY 12110.

Culinary faculty extends solidarity to California colleagues

By Matt Smith
msmith@nysutmail.org

Unionized faculty members at the Culinary Institute of America in Hyde Park are standing in solidarity with their colleagues in California whose lives have been impacted by devastating wild fires. Forty people have died in the fires and scores of homes and businesses have been destroyed.

Culinary Teachers Association President Richard Horvath urged the CIA’s administration to use caution

before classes and other activities resume at the CIA Greystone campus in California’s Napa Valley

“The Hyde Park faculty share the concern of the entire CIA community for the welfare of all students, faculty, and staff at our Greystone campus,” wrote Horvath in a letter to administrators. His 125-member local is affiliated with NYSUT and the American Federation of Teachers.

“Faculty, students and staff there will clearly need time to plan for their return to campus and the resumption of classes and other operations, and

we hope they will not need to begin those tasks until more immediate anxieties about safety can subside.”

Policy for CIA campuses, including Greystone, is set by administrators in Hyde Park who said that “the safety and well-being of our students, staff and faculty are at the very core of all deliberations as we navigate these unprecedented conditions.” Fires spared the institute’s Greystone and Copia campuses and both have reopened.

The AFT and California Federation of Teachers have set up a

disaster relief fund to help fire victims. Donations can be made at www.aft.org/disaster-relief-fund-ca.

DONATE ONLINE

California FT President Josh Pechthalt said the fires have resulted in “catastrophic” loss for scores of CFT members, many of whom “have lost everything, while many more have been forced to evacuate with just their wallets and their keys, and the future of their homes uncertain.”

Who is Janus?

And why should you care?

Take our quiz to find out!



NYSUT pipeline produces more political hopefuls

By Ned Hoskin

nhoskin@nysutmail.org

NYSUT's Pipeline Project, which encourages and trains local union members to step up and seek political office, has again placed candidates on ballots around the state in this "off" election year.

When you go to the polls on Nov. 7 to vote NO on Proposition 1 — the constitutional convention referendum — be sure to support local candidates who support your union's agenda in your communities.

Two examples: NYSUT Board member Sparrow Tobin, who is running for a seat on the Middletown city council, and Michelle Roman, a Batavia teacher who is seeking a city council seat in Lockport.

Early in his teaching career, Tobin realized that many of the decisions about education were made by politicians, not classroom teachers. So, he started to find ways to advocate for his students outside of the classroom. He joined his union and other advocacy groups to speak up on the issues his students face. He views the labor movement as a means to advocate for working family values, economic fairness and social justice.

Roman is a 20-year public school teacher and devoted advocate for students and their families. She says a strong community is supported by strong, compassionate residents. Roman promises to bring more transparency to local government, which, she says, is established when more people from the neighborhoods and wards are included on committees and boards.

NYSUT's Pipeline Project does the same thing, helping local working people to take a more active role in making decisions and setting policies to improve their communities.

"If you would like to get involved and possibly run for office, we can help you," said NYSUT President Andy Pallotta. "Please contact your local president."

Here's the thing about existential threats: You have to take them one at a time.

A year and a half ago, the U.S. Supreme Court decided for the defendants in *Friedrichs v. California Teachers Association*. In a 4-4 deadlock, the court upheld decades-old precedent that says those who benefit from union representation must pay fair-share fees. We won! Right? Well, the 4-4 tie was, of course, precipitated by the death of Justice Antonin Scalia.

Get ready for the big rematch.

The Supreme Court in September agreed to hear *Janus v. AFSCME Council 31*, a case that again challenges fair-share fees and threatens public sector unions. *Janus* culminates decades of attacks on working people by corporate CEOs, the wealthiest 1 percent, and the politicians who do their bidding.

So, how much do you know about the next battle over "fair share?"

Take our quiz:

1. Who is Janus?

- a. A film distributor known for introducing many foreign classics to American audiences.
- b. A whiny television character who dated Chandler Bing on "Friends."
- c. Mark Janus, a child support specialist at the Illinois Department of Healthcare Services, who benefits from union representation but does not want to pay his fair share for those benefits.

2. Janus v. AFSCME aims to:

- a. Limit the freedom of working people to join together in unions.
- b. Make it easier for workers to join together for the purpose of collective bargaining.
- c. Allow consumers to cut the union label off of their pillows and bedding without fear of prosecution.

3. People keep talking about Abood. What is that?

- a. A Boston-based, high-end clothing designer.
- b. A side dish made with beans and rice served in Turkish cuisine.

- c. The 1970s case in which the Supreme Court determined it was fair and reasonable to expect people who benefit from union representation to pay something for it.

4. Who really initiated Janus?

- a. Someone named Harris V. Quinn.
- b. New York City Executive Assistant District Attorney Jack McCoy.
- c. Billionaire Illinois Gov. Bruce Rauner in an overt political attack on public sector workers. He was later found to have "no standing" to bring suit. Undeterred, Janus, was then used to sign on instead.

5. Who said: "At the end of the day, your union fights to protect your salary, pensions and rights in the workplace."

- a. NYSUT President Andy Pallotta
- b. Gov. Andrew Cuomo
- c. Mr. Met

ANSWERS:
1. c 2. a
3. c 4. c
5. a



Order your calendar today!

The 2017-18 VOTE-COPE commemorative calendar is now on sale. This special edition, 16-month wall calendar — September 2017 - December 2018 — features New York State labor images throughout the years.

VOTE-COPE wall calendars are \$10 each, including shipping. Quantities are limited.

Make your check payable to NYSUT Advocacy Fund and mail to Karen Rhatigan, NYSUT Legislative & Political Department, 800 Troy-Schenectady Road, Latham, NY 12110. Be sure to include your name, address and telephone number, and how many calendars you want.

NYSUT plans major push to protect hospitals, kids from health care cuts

By Ned Hoskin

nhoskin@nysutmail.org

State university hospitals and other public facilities that provide the vast majority of health care to New York's indigent and uninsured could lose hundreds of millions in funding if Congress does not renew the "disproportionate share hospitals" (DSH) payments that expired Oct. 1.

The Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) also expired with the start of the new fiscal year. Both programs were scheduled for phase-out on the assumption that the 2010 Affordable Care Act would eliminate the need for them.

SUNY hospitals could see millions in cuts now, and tens of millions more through 2025.

"These cuts would deal a devastating blow to the high-quality, affordable care provided daily by the

state's public hospitals in SUNY," said Frederick E. Kowal, president of United University Professions, which represents more than 15,000 members at SUNY hospitals.

Gov. Andrew Cuomo said he might call the Legislature into a special session to balance the cuts in federal funding. That could mean further cuts to chronically underfunded SUNY hospitals, and possible cuts across the board, including education aid.

However, Cuomo also said federal action to renew these programs would relieve the need for drastic action before the next legislative session opens in January. It could happen. Senate Democratic Leader Chuck Schumer, D-New York, and House Democratic Leader Nancy Pelosi, D-San Francisco, believe they have a deal with President Trump to work out a new federal spending plan that would solve the health care problems before the end of the year.

Should state lawmakers return to Albany this fall, NYSUT "will pull out all the stops to ensure the Legislature and governor do the right thing," said NYSUT President Andy Pallotta.

If the Legislature reconvenes, NYSUT political action coordinators will use in-district lobby days, phone banks, letter-writing campaigns and more to urge lawmakers to protect the state's most vulnerable citizens and not to eviscerate other budget lines that are also as important.

The DSH funding is disbursed as a federal match to state funding. In a memo explaining that the state recently released some of its funding share, the Department of Health said, "the state's immediate objectives on managing federal cuts to the DSH program are to provide each participating hospital a fair allocation and to assure each hospital's financial stability."

Similarly, CHIP, the 20-year-old

program that keeps kids healthy and ready to learn, was due to be reauthorized by Sept. 30, but Congress let it expire and funding will run out soon.

Nearly half a million children across the state rely on CHIP for routine checkups, immunizations, medicine, dental care and eyeglasses. Without these services, these kids and more than 8 million others around the U.S. could go to school sick or unable to read or engage because they need glasses or are sick.

"Children can't learn if their health needs are not being properly met," said AFT President Randi Weingarten. She urged congressional leaders to renew the program.

Although the ACA helped reduce the number of uninsured in New York and the U.S. by approximately half, it didn't reach the level anticipated in 2010. The need for these programs is still critical, Pallotta said.

By Matt Smith

msmith@nysutmail.org

As the U.S. Supreme Court readies to hear arguments in a case that could decimate the finances of public-sector unions, a small Northern New York local has singlehandedly demonstrated the value of union membership and the critical role unions play in protecting workers.

The South Jefferson Teachers Association, which represents some 155 members just south of Watertown, saved its retirees from losing their drug coverage after a cost-cutting move by the district would have shifted those 65 and older from the district's prescription plan to Medicare Part D.

Union saves retiree drug plan

"It was the right thing to do," said SJTA President Sarah Morris. "Our retirees worked so hard for good contracts, and they should have the same" protections for which they fought.

Morris learned of the unilateral change after being notified by a retiree who received a letter from the district. She immediately began working to rectify the matter, bringing in NYSUT labor relations and legal staff to guide and support the local.

"If we didn't have NYSUT's help, we'd still be negotiating," said Morris, specifically noting the work of LRS Mike Cocco and Watertown Regional Office staff, whom she called "instru-

mental in helping resolve this issue."

The union had three months from the May 18 coverage change to serve the district with a Notice of Claim. "Thankfully," said Morris, South Jeff retirees Sandra Haight and Anna Mae Cooper "stepped up and signed the claim." Once it was served, the conversation between the union and the district began moving quickly toward a resolution that, ultimately, restored the retirees' prescription coverage back to its original plan.

"I truly believe the district didn't understand the ramifications," Morris said. "It never meant to put seniors under any type of stress," and the district worked cooperatively with the

union to resolve the issue.

The Supreme Court will hear arguments early next year in *Janus v. AFSCME*. The case will weigh whether workers who have their salary, health coverage and retirement protections negotiated by a union should pay their fair share.

While South Jeff's success in restoring retirees' drug coverage underscores the value of union membership, Morris said it also highlights the importance of maintaining relationships with members, and management, too.

"What our local learned along the way," Morris said, "was that a good working relationship with the district will resolve issues quicker, and how important it is to be connected with your retirees."

Unions sue to stop SUNY charters' fake certification scheme

By **Sylvia Saunders**
ssaunder@nysutmail.org

Asserting that the move sells out the state's most vulnerable children and creates a two-tiered certification system, NYSUT filed suit to stop the SUNY Charter Schools Committee from implementing illegal regulations that would "certify" teachers in some charter schools with just a month of instruction and a week of practice teaching.

The lawsuit filed in state Supreme Court in Manhattan charges that the committee exceeded its legal authority and usurped the role of the Legislature by adopting a new and less rigorous set of certification standards for some of the state's charter schools. The suit was filed on behalf of NYSUT, the United Federation of

Teachers and two charter school teachers who are union members.

The suit contends the new rules would "significantly undercut the quality of teaching in SUNY-approved charter schools," and would create "an essentially fake certification process, one not valid for employment in New York's public school districts, other charter schools or the public schools of other states."

While charter networks are plagued by sky-high teacher turnover, NYSUT President Andy Pallotta noted that lowering the standards is wrong and only hurts children.

The new regulations, approved by the SUNY committee at its Oct. 11 meeting, would allow charter schools to self-certify their teachers with only 160 hours of classroom instruction and 40 hours of practice teaching.

The regulations *suggest* but do not mandate that charter teachers complete a certification exam and have a bachelor's degree.

The lawsuit notes the regulations violate the Charter School Act, which specifically caps the number of uncertified teachers a charter school can employ. The suit also argues the committee violated the State Administrative Procedure Act because it did not submit a revised version of the regulations for public comment. The committee revised its original proposal that required only 30 hours of instruction after the union spoke out against the plan.

According to the State Education Department, charters have a nearly 40 percent annual turnover rate of teachers, versus a 14 percent rate for public schools. In some charters,



EL-WISE NOISETTE

■ Aaron Major, chapter president of UUP Albany, brings his son, Emile, to a union rally protesting the SUNY Charter School Committee's plan to self-certify teachers.

more than half the teachers left from one school year to the next, making it difficult for the schools to maintain the required percentage of fully certified teachers for their faculties.

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BECKY MILLER

From left, Sally Lord of Ulster County BOCES chats about the value of being a member of a union with Wendy Ashline of the North Colonie Teachers Association.

By Ned Hoskin

nhoskin@nysutmail.org

This fall, thousands of you made a personal connection with your statewide union as Education Autumn continued NYSUT's member-to-member organizing initiative.

"We built on the success and momentum from Education Summer by growing this statewide network

of member organizers," said NYSUT President Andy Pallotta. "They have taken a leading role in the campaign to promote our members' rights and to fight for educational justice."

The organizers knocked on tens of thousands of doors all over the state to have face-to-face conversations with other NYSUT members. For many, it was illuminating.

"People tend to think of NYSUT as the solver of problems," said Robin

Parente, an Education Autumn member organizer from Chittenango TA. "But the truth is, we are all NYSUT."

NYSUT Board member Don Carlisto described the effort as "a very pure expression of unionism — member-to-member direct action, in a very personal way, going into people's homes and talking about the value of the union."

Organizers spoke with members about issues like the importance of

voting NO on the constitutional convention Nov. 7, the value of being a member of a union, and struggles to improve our schools, our professions and our communities.

"I truly believe we're going to win this fight on the constitutional convention," Carlisto said. "But we're also going to make sure that each and every member sees union value, and when we look back on these initiatives, we're going to say this was the game-changer, the fact that members put feet in the street to connect with other members."



The clock is ticking

On Nov. 7, New York voters will be asked to decide whether a convention should be held to rewrite our state constitution. This "Politicians' Convention" would be a multi-million dollar boondoggle funded by our tax dollars ... and would give Albany insiders and special interest groups the opportunity to change our state constitution to benefit themselves.

The vote is just days away!

Contribute now to the No NY Convention Fund to help us get the word out about the risks of a "Politicians' Convention" and ensure that New York doesn't make this terrible mistake! Donate online at mac.nysut.org. And, on Nov. 7, be sure to turn your ballot over and vote NO on Proposition 1. *For more about Prop 1, see pages 14-15.*

Support adjuncts during Campus Equity Week

Did you know that the average adjunct professor earns about \$2,700 per course, or about \$21,000 annually? Or that many adjunct faculty don't have access to health insurance, sick leave, or even office space?

These and other issues are the inspiration for Campus Equity Week, an annual campaign started nearly 20 years ago to highlight workplace inequality in higher education. CEW 2017 takes place the last week of October, with a national day of action slated for Tuesday, Oct. 31.

Organizers selected the theme "Mask4CampusEquity" to highlight the workplace inequalities "masked" behind the gravitas of higher education and campus life.

Educators are encouraged to stage arts-centered actions on Oct. 31 and throughout the week to raise awareness about workplace inequalities on their campuses.



Plan your project

Visit Mask4CampusEquity.com for a CEW 2017 toolkit, project suggestions and details about the many challenges facing adjunct professors in higher education. The toolkit offers a downloadable logo, masthead, bookmarks and an order link for union-made, CEW stickers and buttons.

Fix APPR, once and for all



With the moratorium on the mandated use of student tests in teacher evaluations now in its third year, it's essential to fix the state's failed Annual Professional Performance Review (APPR) system.

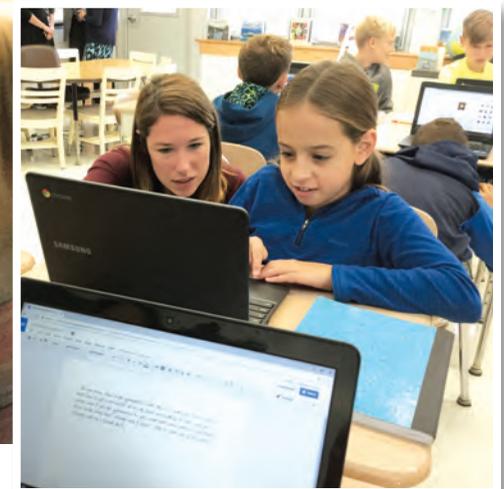
Take action now at NYSUT's Member Action Center — mac.nysut.org — to tell the Regents to support a meaningful teacher evaluation system that works for teachers, students and parents!

Urge the Regents to build on the progress of the last three years and institute a meaningful teacher evaluation process that:

- returns teacher evaluations to local control;
- eliminates the requirement for student test scores to be used in teacher evaluations; and
- promotes teacher development and support.

Teacher residency

A new approach to teacher recruitment and retention takes shape



PHOTOS: SYLVIA SAUNDERS

By Sylvia Saunders
ssaunder@nysutmail.org

Ask Ryan Schuette about the new teacher prep program he's in, and he'll tell you he's like one of those harried resident doctors on a TV medical show.

"It's only Monday and I'm completely exhausted," said Schuette, a resident teacher at Hudson Falls High School as part of his SUNY master's degree study to become a secondary English teacher. "It's definitely long hours and intense — but I love it."

Schuette, who graduated with a bachelor's degree in business administration and management, is one of several residents pioneering The Classroom Academy, a union-backed residency model launched this fall by two rural North Country school districts, the local BOCES, and SUNY Plattsburgh's Queensbury campus.

The pilot program began with a \$738,000 National Education Association grant distributed over three years. The NEA promotes clinically rich preparation to boost teacher recruitment and retention.

"The goal is to fully immerse the teacher candidate with a strong support system and ongoing professional development," said program director Colleen McDonald, a recently retired teacher leader and Cambridge Faculty Association member. "At the same time, the program offers much-needed teacher leadership roles — a seriously rewarding career path for accomplished teachers."

NYSUT Executive Vice President Jolene T. DiBrango said residency is a promising approach.

"At a time when we're facing a teacher shortage, we want to do everything we can to encourage more people to enter the profession and,

most importantly, help them succeed," she said.

About 50 teacher residency programs are scattered around the country, most in big cities like San Francisco, Boston, Seattle and New York City. The Classroom Academy is among a handful of residency programs serving rural schools, which also have difficulty recruiting and retaining educators.

Under The Classroom Academy model, aspiring teachers with bachelor's degrees are placed in a two-year residency in Washington County schools, including Cambridge, Hudson Falls and Washington-Saratoga-Warren-Hamilton-Essex BOCES. The program uses the same lingo as hospital residencies: Candidates are called "residents" and the experienced instructors overseeing their work are known as "attendings."

At top: Teaching resident Megan Headwell works with a small group of second-graders on math. Above, resident Kayleigh Ward helps a student with a writing prompt.

Aside from getting extended first-hand experience in the classroom, each resident receives a \$22,000-a-year living stipend to ensure equity and access, plenty of individualized and group support, and a year's credit toward professional certification.

Residents also take master's level courses, including up to 15 credits in pedagogy the summer before their classroom placement. The attending teachers receive a \$4,500 stipend each year to recognize the complexity of their role.

When Courtney Berg, a former teaching assistant at WSWHE BOCES, first heard about the

Residents and attending teachers meet once a month to reflect on their experiences. To hear audio recordings about their impressions so far, go to <https://archive.storycorps.org/user/cmcdteach/>



residency program, she thought it was too good to be true. "I said, 'What? I'm going to get to work at a school, earn a stipend and (pursue) my master's degree?' I thought I'd have to go to another country or something."

When she decided to become a teacher, Berg initially planned to keep working as a TA and go to night school, but that would have taken considerably longer than the two-year residency program.

She also likes the program because it's so hands-on. "That's the way I learn best," she said. The arrangement has opened Berg's eyes to what a general education inclusion classroom looks like.

Residents said they feel fortunate to spend so much time in classrooms. In just the third week of school, resident Stacia Bonanno was already leading an ELA lesson on gratitude with her second graders while attending teacher Heather Gwin took notes and quietly interceded when a boy was having trouble staying focused.

Later in the day, Bonanno and Gwin would take some time to compare notes on what went well with the lesson and what might be improved.

Down the hall in first grade, a colorful photo display showed students enjoying a hands-on "Making Caves" project with resident Kayleigh Ward. As students started working on paragraphs, both Ward and attending teacher Jessica Kirk worked their way around the room helping individual students.

At Hudson Falls Elementary, resident Megan Headwell marveled at how fast the days go in the second-grade class she shares with Jessica Hogan. "When I worked at an accounting firm, I'd sit at my desk and check the clock every three minutes," Headwell said. "Now, when I'm in the classroom the day flies by. I'm not focusing on time because I enjoy what I'm doing. It's such a good feeling."

"I'm really happy this is a two-year program," said Schuette, who is working with grades 9-10-11 English teacher Sharon Farrell. "If this were the traditional student teaching experience, I'd just about be wrapping up my first placement," he said. "I feel like I'm just getting started."

The attending teachers said they get as much out of the experience as the residents.

"It's definitely been very reflective for me as an educator," said Kirk. "It makes me take a step back and think through more of what I do and why I do it ... it's a growing experience for both of us."

Like many of the attending teachers, Kirk is using the experience while she participates in the National Board process. As part of the residency program, both residents and attending teachers participate in a monthly professional learning community experience, keep reflective journals and will do clinical "rounds" to observe other practitioners.

"To have a two-year placement and a consistent go-to person

is phenomenal," said Cambridge FA President Donna Phinney, who helped recruit participants. "They're going to be so much more prepared."

"I'm excited for them. You want to tell them, 'You're so lucky!'" said Hudson Falls Superintendent Linda

Goewey. While there's no specific service requirement after the two years, she hopes the residency model will encourage participants to look at rural districts and want to stay.

Stephen Danna, dean of SUNY Plattsburgh's Queensbury branch campus, said he envisions districts will start looking for residents to fill specific upcoming vacancies.

"Someone might say, 'Hey we're going to be looking for a bio teacher,' and we can keep that in mind with placements," Danna said. "This program becomes a feeder system — helps us create a farm league leading to the major league."

McDonald said a key part of the NEA grant was creating a program that could be scaled up and sustainable, without depending on grant funding. That's where BOCES and the consortia with multiple districts came in. Under a state-approved Contract for Shared Service, or CoSer, the districts are reimbursed for a substantial portion of salaries.

For example, Hudson Falls will get back 70 cents for every dollar spent, said WSWHE BOCES administrator Tony Muller. "It's an investment for the district," Muller said. "If you bring someone in for two years and they know you and the culture, there's hope they'll stay with you," he said. "And you're creating very strong teachers."

For more information, contact McDonald at teachmeducation@gmail.com.

Regents phase in new passing score on edTPA exam

Following the recommendations of a panel of education experts, the Regents approved a phase-in of a revised passing score on the problematic edTPA teacher certification exam.

Responding to complaints from the union and the field, the State Education Department convened a standards setting panel in June to review the edTPA passing score.

The Regents approved the recommended phase-in, which drops the passing score from 41 to 38 for 15-rubric edTPA handbooks starting in January 2018. The state will then slowly raise that mark until it reaches 40 in 2022.

The edTPA requires aspiring teachers to submit a portfolio of work, including a video of themselves teaching. Even with the newly lowered score, the passing mark in New York will still be among the highest in the country.

Jamie Dangler, vice president for academics at United University Professions, representing SUNY faculty and academic staff, said the score change is only fair since there are concerns about the way the edTPA is scored. Pearson hires scorers from a national pool and has not disclosed information about who is scoring NYS exams.

"Establishing such high passing scores when there are real problems with the assessment itself was a disservice to our teacher candidates," she said.

The Regents also adopted a multiple measures review process so students who fail the edTPA within two points of the new passing score can be reviewed for certification based on other measures of their readiness to teach.

SED Commissioner MaryEllen Elia said the actions "strike the right balance by providing fairness to those seeking to become teachers, while maintaining some of the most rigorous certification requirements in the country."

— Sylvia Saunders

A constitutional convention?

There's a better way!

Holding a state constitutional convention is a wasteful option that could cost millions of dollars and would be controlled by Albany politicians and insiders. It's a safe bet that nothing good for average New Yorkers would come out of it. Here's why:

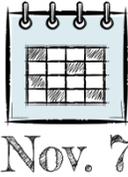


There's a better way to amend the state constitution: An individual bill for a single amendment is introduced and passed by two, separately elected state Legislatures. The amendment then goes to the voters to decide.



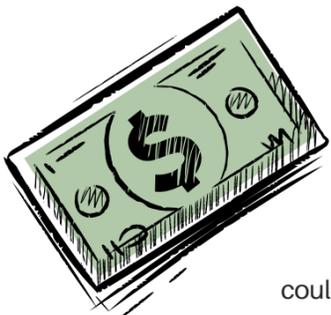
Flip over!!

On Nov. 7, voters are asked whether the state should hold a convention to revise and amend — even fully rewrite — the state constitution. The question — **Proposition 1** — will appear on the back of the ballot.



A convention could have a huge impact on your right to join a union, your retirement security, health care and your children's access to quality public education. Even the vast preserves of the Adirondacks would be exposed to political whims. **Every right we enjoy is at risk.**

If Proposition 1 were approved, voters in November 2018 would elect 204 convention "delegates." Make no mistake: The candidates would be political insiders, lobbyists and lawmakers — **not average citizens.**



Taxpayers would foot the bill for a convention. Each delegate would be paid the equivalent of an Assembly member's salary — \$79,500 — plus travel, plus expenses. The convention party for "delegates" could last days, months and more — **there is no time limit.**

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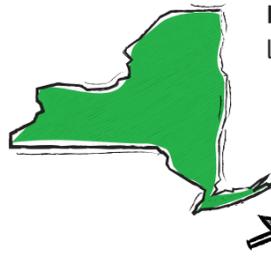


1967:
ALL
proposals
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Any changes proposed by delegates would go before voters in the months after the convention ends. The last time that happened — in 1967 — voters rejected all the proposals — **a huge waste of taxpayer money.**

It starts with a specific idea!

This process has been used nearly 200 times in the past 125 years and incurs **NO EXTRA COST.** For example, in 2014 the constitution was amended so the state Legislature could go "paperless," saving taxpayers \$325,000 a year.



Here's another example: In 2014, legislators proposed amending the constitution to create an independent commission on redistricting to ensure residents were represented fairly. It passed.

A couple years later, after the next elections, it passed again in the new Legislature.



Voters then approved the referendum.



Now the independent commission — not sitting legislators — will prescribe changes to election districts based on the 2020 U.S. Census. The new district lines will be in place for the 2022 elections.

The constitution was amended — and improved — **and it didn't cost taxpayers a thing.**

"Do not let politically connected delegates, backed by anti-union billionaires, rewrite the document that guarantees your most basic rights. Vote NO and urge your friends and family to do the same."

— NYSUT President
Andy Pallotta

COST
\$ MILLIONS

The **WRONG** way gives political insiders excessive and wholesale authority to alter the purpose and priorities of the state government — potentially to:

- strip our rights to join a union and bargain collectively;
- imperil public education;
- take away our pensions;
- weaken protections, such as unemployment insurance and health and safety regulations;
- weaken protections for state lands;
- allow fracking;
- give tax breaks to Wall Street and the wealthy.

vote
NO
on
Prop 1

COST
\$0

The **RIGHT** — and BETTER way — is a proven process for concrete, specific ideas to move forward, ideas that will improve state government without exposing New York State citizens to the whims of special interests and political hacks, and without the huge price.

Protect your rights and security. **VOTE NO** on Proposition 1 to **defeat the referendum** on the constitutional convention!

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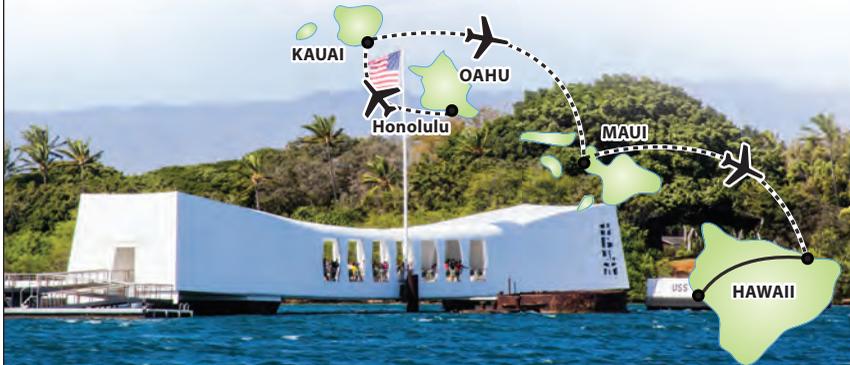
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QUESTIONS for ...

Leif Roberg

Coxsackie-Athens Teachers Association

Global history teacher Leif Roberg is treasurer of the Coxsackie-Athens TA.

1. So much of 'union work' happens behind the scenes. What should members know?

The union is an incredibly powerful, unified voice that protects rights, solves problems and advocates for students. Even something as simple as having a maximum number of classes and a required number of planning periods is absolutely crucial for us to do our jobs effectively and efficiently. Without those contractual protections, districts would feel financial pressure to cut costs by adding classes and reducing planning time, which would severely curtail our ability to plan high quality lessons and evaluate students' work thoroughly.

2. What contractual benefits might members overlook?

Most contracts are full of benefits, small and large. Under our contract, a teacher can apply for a sabbatical for a full year and earn half of a salary, or for a half a year and earn a full salary. This opportunity has been in the contract for decades, but is rarely used. Another nupt is guaranteed access to a photocopier from 8 a.m. until 4 p.m. This makes the lives of our teachers much easier as we come in the morning or stay in the afternoon in order to prepare our lessons for the coming days.

3. You completed a yearlong sabbatical. What impact did that have on your teaching?

I used my sabbatical to travel to India, China and Israel — areas I

teach the most about. The sabbatical empowered me to teach about complicated and difficult topics. For example, when I teach about the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, I'm able to refer to conversations I had with Palestinian teenagers I met in Bethlehem as well as conversations I had with Israelis.



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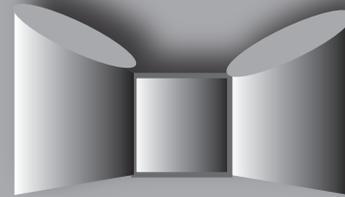
4. How did your union involvement begin?

I first witnessed the power of being in the union when one of our members was suffering from headaches after the completion of a construction project in her work space. The district did not want to pay to test the air quality, so the union contacted OSHA. I realized, at that moment, that the union is there to protect not only our salaries, benefits and health, but also the health and well-being of the students we serve.

5. What are some key benefits union members enjoy?

In many ways, a strong contract provides peace of mind. Instead of worrying about whether my boss will allow me to use a bereavement day or whether I'll be able to get health insurance, I can put most of my energy into ensuring my students get the best education I could possibly provide for them. The union also provides so many social opportunities for us to interact as colleagues.

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EL-WISE NOISETTE

Stepping out to fight breast cancer

By Liza Frenette

lfrenette@nysutmail.org

Thousands of NYSUT members and their supporters added lots of pink to the fall landscape during October's Making Strides Against Breast Cancer walks. Among them was Hilton social studies teacher Steven Sorensen, an eight-year Making Strides veteran who always brings along the girls' soccer team he coaches.

This year, 90 girls in specialty pink shirts powered the walk. His teams have collectively raised \$45,000, he said. Every other year, Sorensen brings in a speaker from the American Cancer Society to meet with the soccer players and talk to them about what the ACS does with the money that is raised.

"I've also brought in alumni from the soccer program who've battled and survived breast cancer," said Sorensen, a member of the Hilton Central Schools Teachers Association.

Deborah Collier's involvement with Making Strides began in the 1980s. Knee surgery sidelined her from walking this year, but the Yonkers Federation of Teachers retiree sat at a table handing out shirts and information to walkers.

When the Making Strides walks started in Pleasantville, there were

"just a few of us ... very few," she said.

"I have seen it go full-scale. There are more walkers, more organizations, more politicians involved. It has mushroomed into a gigantic, wonderful thing."

Her breast cancer advocacy will never retire, it appears. "Yesterday I was in the dentist's office and got the link so he could make a donation!" she said.

After so many years in the classroom, neither will her role in educating others. "My baby sister lives in Georgia. When she was 27 I pushed her to get a mammogram. Turns out she had cancer," Collier said. "It returned the next year, an aggressive form." Collier urged her sister to get reconstructive surgery following the mastectomy. That surgeon found an infection that had gone undetected, she said. "Having this knowledge has been very helpful."



PROVIDED

■ Clockwise from top left, Hilton Cadets soccer team; NYSUT President Andy Pallotta, left, with Schenectady CCCFA members Ingrid and John O'Connell in Albany; Blind Brook teachers at Manhattanville College; UFT chapter leader Joanne Oliver; from left, NYSUT officers Jolene T. DiBrango and J. Philippe Abraham, Mohonasen TA President Maria Pacheco and Cobleskill-Richmondville TA President Dawn Kaminsky.



PROVIDED



EL-WISE NOISETTE

[PASSINGS]

Robert (Bob) Astrowsky

Bob Astrowsky, a staunch unionist and former assistant secretary of the



United Federation of Teachers and the longtime chair of NYSUT's Representative Assembly convention committee, died Sept. 3. He was 76.

"I never heard (Astrowsky) turn down a call for help," recalled NYSUT Executive Vice President Emeritus Alan Lubin. "Bob could not say no. When asked, he would show up for a 6 a.m. picket line for any workers who needed support."

A former teacher and guidance counselor whose dedication to the union spanned more than 50 years, Astrowsky began his union service as chapter leader of PS 148 in Manhattan. He would go on to hold a number of positions at the UFT and serve on the NYSUT Board of Directors.

Perhaps most notably, Astrowsky chaired NYSUT's annual Representative Assembly convention committee from its inception.

"Bob's leadership at our conventions and his dedication to union democracy made NYSUT a stronger, more representative organization," said NYSUT President Andy Pallotta.

Kathleen Maxwell Bernstein

Aug. 18, 2017
Mohawk Valley Community College Adjuncts and Part-timers

Marjorie Flanagan

Aug. 17, 2017
Kenmore Teachers Association

Full obituaries, if provided, are available at www.nysut.org. Submissions must include decedent's full name, union affiliation and date of death, and contact information for the person submitting the notice. Fax notices to 518-213-6415; send to Andrew Watson, NYSUT United, 800 Troy-Schenectady Road, Latham, NY 12110-2455; or email awatson@nysutmail.org.

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WORKSHOP ON MUSLIM Students — Dr. Shawgi Tell of the School of Education at Nazareth College in Rochester has conducted dozens of excellent workshops for K-12 educators across the state on how to support and educate Muslim students. To schedule one for your school, please contact him at: 585-389-2623 or stell5@naz.edu.

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Getting to know ... Anthony Minieri

Anthony V. Minieri, a carpenter in the City School District of New Rochelle for more than 20 years, is a member of F.U.S.E. (Federation of United School Employees). Bill Coleman, a union delegate for F.U.S.E. and a member of NYSUT's SRP Advisory Committee, interviewed him.

Tell me about your job and why you love what you do.

As one of the districtwide carpenters in the New Rochelle City School District, I am responsible for making repairs and fulfilling requests for creating and installing fixtures. Since I started I have made everything from bookshelves, to cabinets, to guitar racks for students and staff in any of our 11 school buildings and our city hall.

It feels great to give back to a school district that led me to the career I have today. Back in junior high school at Isaac E. Young in New Rochelle, I took woodshop, and at New Rochelle High School, I took

carpentry and drafting. I went on to Westchester Community College for civil engineering, and eventually attended Iona College to gain experience in construction and facilities management.

After serving in the Marines, I opened my own business to build and renovate homes. I was later hired with the New Rochelle City School District. I had come full circle. My experience at a young age prepared me to serve the district that gave me my start in the field.

How did you get involved in your union?

In 1978, I joined the Local Carpenters' Union 350 in New Rochelle. When I started working as a carpenter for the New Rochelle CSD, I saw an opportunity when a building representative stepped down. I was voted in as the building representative for 17 tradesmen. I take the job very seriously. I relay important news and information to our members and, most importantly,

I ensure that we work in a safe environment. Recently, I was asked to sit on the Grievance Chair Committee to select a grievance chairperson for the F.U.S.E.

What about hobbies or other activities?

I consider myself a history buff and an avid reader. Visiting historical places is a great pastime. Of course, I always enjoy spending time with my children, and coach their baseball, softball and soccer teams. I find time to attend local board meetings and community events to hear different perspectives and stay current on the issues. When all is said and done, I try to find some personal time to grab the pole and go fishing!

How do you make a difference?

When I visit the schools, I am proud to see the work we have done. Seeing the students in the classroom



EL-WISE NOISETTE

on the benches we built, for example.

It gives me great joy knowing that my co-workers and I were able to contribute positively to the learning experience. I look forward to coming to work every day.

My school experiences, my time as a business owner, the relationships I have built over the years with my co-workers and subcontractors, and my time with the union have all shaped the work I do today. We are here for the staff and students.

Nov. 21 is SRP Recognition Day Order celebration materials now!

By Leslie Duncan Fottrell
lfottrel@nysutmail.org

School-Related Professionals — bus drivers, aides and monitors who transport students to and from school; teacher aides and teaching assistants who work in the classroom; security, grounds workers and maintenance staff who ensure clean and safe surroundings; clerical, secretarial and registrar staff who keep things organized; and cafeteria workers who provide nutritious meals — all play

a vital role in the education of New York's public school students.

This year, Nov. 21 — New York State's SRP Recognition Day — is the time to let all SRPs know they are Essential to Education.

"SRPs are the heartbeat of our schools and deserve to be honored on this day and every day for the hard work they do supporting student success," said NYSUT Second Vice President Paul Pecorale, whose office oversees SRP issues.

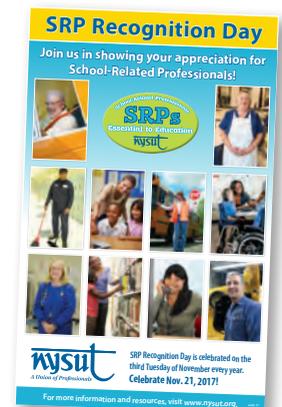
NYSUT locals celebrate the day and SRPs in wonderfully creative

ways, sometimes in conjunction with their school districts and/or local parent teacher associations.

Visit www.nysut.org/srpd for award-winning examples of ways to celebrate the SRPs in your local or district. You can download celebration materials to print on your own. The webpage has a special link for local presidents to request SRP celebration kits and "SRPs Essential to Education" stickers (requires leader login). Once you place your order, be on the lookout for a packet



stickers & posters!



marked, "2017 SRP Recognition Day Materials Enclosed — Open before Nov. 21."

Don't forget to share your SRP Recognition Day celebration photos and videos online at www.facebook.com/NYSUTUnited.

[RETIREES IN ACTION]



EL-WISE NOISETTE

Education Summer participant Mary Daly, RC 6, knocked on more than 300 union doors to highlight the value of NYSUT membership and encourage members to vote NO on Proposition 1.



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From left, Eve Creary, UFT; Aisha Cook, New Rochelle FUSE; Diane Torstrup, RC 16; state Sen. George Latimer; student Mariah Newbey; Marty Sommer, RC 16; and Florence McCue, at-large ED 51-53 director, have a simple message: On Nov. 7, vote NO on the constitutional convention!

Regional conferences

- RC 17-23, Nov. 2, TBA. Retiree Services Consultant: Joan Perrini (Long Island retirees)
- RC 11, 45, May 23, 2018, TBA. Retiree Services Consultant: Mark Padgett

WANTED:

NYSUT Retiree Services Consultant for Retiree Councils 17-19, representing Nassau County on Long Island. For information, contact Floyd Cameron, NYSUT manager of retiree and social services, at 800-342-9810, ext. 6299.



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RC 3 President Gail Niparts, and former RC 3 President Dave D'Amato pledge to vote no on Proposition 1, the constitutional convention, on Nov. 7.

Did you know? ?

NYSUT Retiree Services consultants are resources for retired members, retiree councils and in-service locals on NYSUT retiree matters.

Tracy Beatty, RC 1, 2, 3, 44
716-634-7132

Louise Ortman, RC 4, 46
716-664-7425

Peter Randazzo, RC 5, 6
585-454-5550

Anne Marie Voutsinas, RC 7, 8
315-431-4040

TBD, RC 9, 10
518-783-7977

Mark Padgett, RC 11, 45
607-786-5742

Jennifer Shaad-Derby, RC 12, 13
518-783-7977

Ellen Pincus, RC 14, 15-16
914-592-4411

TBD, RC 17, 18, 19
516-496-2035

Joan Perrini, RC 20, 21, 22, 23
631-273-8822

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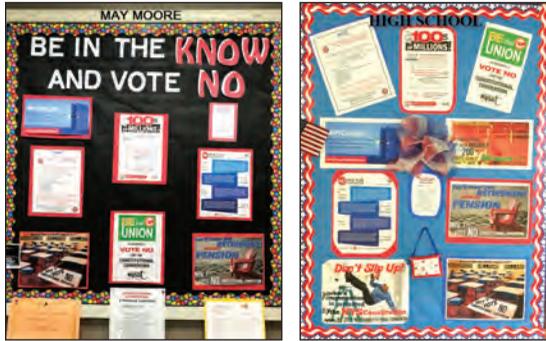
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Deer Park Teachers Association

In September, members of the Deer Park Teachers Association, led by President Bruce Sander, kicked off a friendly competition to spread the word about the importance of voting no on a state constitutional convention. Members in five different schools created eye-catching bulletin boards all about the Nov. 7 vote (above). The local launched an educational campaign last spring, Sander said. As for the competition, it was too close to call. Each participant received a coffee shop gift card.

Guilderland Teachers Association

Securing reliable, affordable child care should not be an obstacle to attending school open house. The Guilderland TA, led by Tara Molloy-Grocki, wanted to ensure as many parents as possible could participate

in their school's "meet-the-teacher" nights. The local provided child care for families of elementary students on two evenings. GTA members and student volunteers from Guilderland High School staffed the events. More than 100 students participated. Each child received a GTA water bottle and pencil.

Rush-Henrietta Employees Association

Members of the Rush-Henrietta Employees Association distributed more than 500 bags of groceries and produce this summer.

Science teacher John Prouty started the Kicking Hunger project after graduating from the NYSUT Leadership Institute. A core group of members decided to tackle the problem of food insecurity during school breaks and over the summer, said Karen Arthmann, NYSUT SRP at-large Board member and RHEA Paraprofessional Unit president.

Members of the RHEA Teacher Chapter and the coalition unit, comprising four School-Related Professionals chapters, worked with the Rush-Henrietta Area Food Terminal and the Rush-Henrietta Rotary Club. The yearlong preparation paid off during distribution events in July and August. Educators

also distributed new and gently used school supplies. More than 100 local families benefited.

"Knowing we could make a little difference in some people's lives was worth all the work," said Arthmann. For more info, visit <https://spark.adobe.com/video/fBp9FjsEfnkaW>.

Catskill Teachers Association

From Memorial Day through Labor Day, visitors to the town and village of Catskill enjoyed about 50 decorated fiberglass felines. One of those cats came courtesy of the 159-member Catskill Teachers Association, led by President Bob Stinson, and art teacher Jennifer Allison. Allison's students decorated the CTA cat.



FACEBOOK.COM/CATSKILLTA

At the end of the art installation, the cats were auctioned; proceeds benefit area nonprofits, animal welfare and promoting the town. This year's auction raised nearly \$40,000.

Share news about your local's union or community events at united@nysutmail.org; include "LIA" in the subject line.

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Navigating life together

Updates to insurance, other programs announced

As the result of a recent program review conducted by the Trustees of the NYSUT Member Benefits Trust, Metropolitan Life Insurance Company (MetLife) has been named the new plan underwriter for the Member Benefits-endorsed Voluntary Disability, Term Life and Level Term Life Insurance programs.

Effective Jan. 1, 2018, MetLife will underwrite the Voluntary Disability Insurance Plan (currently underwritten by Unimerica). Effective March 1, 2018, MetLife will underwrite the Voluntary Term Life and Level Term Life insurance plans (currently underwritten by U.S. Life (AIG)).

Current program participants will receive an official announcement 60 days prior to the effective date of these changes. A follow-up mailing from MetLife will be sent near the effective date of the change (including new

plan materials).

Unimerica is no longer accepting applications for the current Voluntary Disability Insurance Plan. Applications for the new MetLife Disability Insurance Plan will be available this fall with coverage effective dates on or after Jan. 1, 2018.

U.S. Life (AIG) will continue to accept applications for the current Voluntary Term Life and Level Term Life insurance plans through Dec. 1. New enrollees will be transferred to the MetLife Term Life and Level Term Life insurance programs on or after March 1, 2018.

Applications for the new MetLife Term Life and Level Term Life insurance programs will be available in November with coverage effective dates on or after March 1, 2018.

Mercer Consumer remains the plan administrator for the programs.

New CMM plan enrollees

If you enrolled in the NYSUT Member Benefits Catastrophe Major Medical (CMM) Insurance Trust-sponsored plan during the limited-time spring 2017 open enrollment period, your first bill will be arriving soon. Mercer Consumer, the plan's administrator, will be mailing out bills in mid-November.

If you are eligible for payroll or pension deduction of your CMM premium, your bill will provide this option.

Deduction authorization cards submitted with enrollment forms were unable to be processed; therefore, any request for payroll or pension deduction will require another authorization form be submitted.

Be sure to pay your bill by the Dec. 31 deadline. Otherwise, your coverage will not go into effect and you will not be able to enroll again until another

open enrollment period is determined. Questions? Contact Mercer Consumer at 888-386-9788.

New provider for AD&D

NYSUT Member Benefits Trust is now providing NYSUT members and agency fee payers with up to \$1,500 Accidental Death & Dismemberment (AD&D) Insurance, including a travel assistance component. This coverage was previously provided by NYSUT.

For more information about the programs listed above, please visit memberbenefits.nysut.org or call 800-626-8101.

For information about these programs or about contractual endorsement arrangements with providers of endorsed programs, please contact NYSUT Member Benefits.

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How much will my pension be?

For most New York State and Local Employees' Retirement System (ERS) members, your pension is based on four things: your tier, your age, the amount of service credit you have and your final average salary (FAS). Whether you are just beginning your career, or are close to retirement, we have tools to help you prepare.

Where to start

A good place to start is your Member Annual Statement, which is provided to you every year. This gives you personalized information about your ERS account, including the salary and service credit we have on file and benefit projections under the different pension payment options.

Most ERS members in Tiers 1 through 4 can project what their pension will be by using our online Benefit Projection Calculator, www.osc.state.ny.us/retire/members/projecting-your-pension.php. This tool enables you to enter different service credit totals or FAS amounts to see how working longer may impact your pension. Tier 5 and 6 members can find out about their pension benefits by reviewing their plan booklet, available on our publications page at www.osc.state.ny.us/retire/publications/index.php.

A bit further down the road

Most Tier 2, 3 and 4 members with five or more years of service credit are eligible to request a benefit projection. Actively employed members age 50 or older can also request a projection that adds additional



In every issue, state Comptroller Thomas P. DiNapoli, administrative head of the New York State and Local Employees' Retirement System (ERS) and trustee of the

Common Retirement Fund, provides information on the System, which delivers retirement benefits to many NYSUT School-Related Professionals and other support staff. If you are an ERS member with a question of general interest, email united@nysutmail.org.

For immediate assistance, call the ERS Contact Center toll-free at 866-805-0990 or 518-474-7736 in the Capital District.

service credit based on a date of retirement up to five years into the future. In most cases, we'll mail these on the next business day.

To request your benefit projection, call the ERS Contact Center toll-free at 866-805-0990 or 518-474-7736 in the Albany area. You can also send us a Request for Estimate form (RS6030) or write or email us. For more information, visit www.contactNYSLRS.com.

Stay connected

Retirement Online, our online self-service tool, is a safe and secure way to conduct everyday transactions. You can update your contact information, view or update your beneficiaries or apply for a loan. We will introduce additional features that allow you to estimate your projected pension benefit, purchase service credit and more. Register or sign in today from our homepage at www.osc.state.ny.us/retire/index.php.

For more information on retirement planning, read our publication, *How Do I Prepare to Retire?* at www.osc.state.ny.us/retire/publications/vo1709.php.

NYSUT ERS consultants

Most NYSUT School-Related Professionals* belong to the New York State and Local Employees' Retirement System (ERS). NYSUT ERS consultants are available to help SRP members navigate the retirement system. Consultants can answer questions, provide forms and help members contact the ERS. Contact any one of our consultants for assistance.

Trudi Davis • 914-592-4411
troers@nysutmail.org

Kathy Hine • 585-454-5550, ext. 144
rochers@nysutmail.org

Patti Lennon • 516-496-2035, ext. 324
nroers@nysutmail.org

*Note: Certified teaching assistants belong to the state Teachers' Retirement System (TRS).

Protect your pension! Vote NO on Prop 1

Q: I've heard that pension protection is a key reason to vote "no" on the Nov. 7 constitutional convention ballot question. How does the state constitution protect my pension?

A: Our New York State pension system is unique. Under our constitution, the agreement between members and the New York State Teachers' Retirement System is a contractual relationship, meaning that by law your benefits can't be diminished. That's a good thing, because it keeps the state and other public employers, like school districts, on track with their required employer contributions to the retirement system. These protections are guaranteed by article 5, section 7, of the state constitution. However, if that provision is eliminated or changed, those protections could go away. And despite rumors to the contrary, current retirees are NOT exempt from pension changes.

New Jersey is a cautionary tale. For decades, state officials underfunded the New Jersey pension

Don't forget

**VOTE
NO**

The New York State Constitution protects your pension. On Nov. 7, Proposition 1 asks whether a state constitutional convention should be held. It appears on the back of your ballot. So, flip it over and vote "NO" to safeguard your retirement!

system, producing a \$40 billion-plus unfunded liability and placing the pension system for New Jersey teachers and government workers on the brink of collapse. Our current constitution guarantees that a similar situation can't happen in New York State. But if that wording is removed, there's no guarantee that New Jersey's reality couldn't become ours.

Q: Where will the constitutional convention question appear on the Nov. 7 ballot?

A: Proposition 1, the constitutional convention question, will appear on the back of your ballot. So when you're in the voting booth, remember to flip your ballot over and look for Proposition 1 on the backside.

Since state citizens have a lot to lose if a constitutional convention takes place, it's vital that you get to the polls on Nov. 7 and vote "no." Your pension and other fundamental rights you enjoy as a New York State citizen, including free public education, the right to unionize and environmental protections, could depend on it.

Holding a constitutional convention gives delegates — mostly career politicians — a free hand to change or completely rewrite the state constitution. Do you really trust political insiders to protect your best interests?

NYSUT TRS consultants

TRS members with questions may call your teacher-members on the New York State Teachers' Retirement System Board of Directors:

David Keefe • 516-741-1241
(Retiree Representative)

Paul Farfaglia • 315-431-4040
pfarfagl@nysutmail.org

Jolene T. DiBrango
trs-q&a@nysutmail.org





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Member Appreciation Month - February 2018

NYSUT Member Benefits will once again be celebrating the more than 600,000 members of our union with Member Appreciation Month in February 2018. Special prize drawings will be held each day of the month. **To be eligible to win, you must be a member of our voluntary MAP Alert email service.** Learn more and sign up for MAP by visiting memberbenefits.nysut.org.



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