

Spotlight 21

Bay Shore
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SERVING RETIREES FROM

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March-April, 2015

A Message From

President Louisa Eiermann



Did you know that...

- 7 out of 10 of the best high schools in the country are in New York State?
- the highest AP scores come from students in NYS?
- 7 out of 40 finalists for the Intel competition were from NYS, with more semifinalists than any other state, our 90 to California's 46 (84 attended public schools, none attended charter schools) ?
- billions of dollars have been lost to Education since the tax cap?
- seven districts are giving up full-day kindergarten due to budget cuts?
- that student anxiety, manifesting with physical ailments and emotional distress, is on the rise with the appearance of high-stakes testing?
- that the governor's budget does not include any new money for teacher centers, with current funding less than the 2008-2009 levels?
- the governor is asking for more charter schools, yet 126 slots still remain open?
- since 2008 CUNY/SUNY have been cut 1.5 billion dollars, driving up tuition to make up the costs?
- the President is asking for community colleges to be free to those

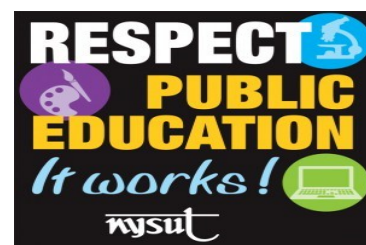
who work for it, yet the governor is aiming to cut funding to ours?

- the governor is after tenure laws that protected us while in service?
- Social Security, Workman's Comp, and public pensions are *defined benefits*, not "entitlements"?
- at the end of 2013 the Social Security Trust fund totaled 2.7 trillion Dollars?
- a Constitutional Convention could occur in 2017 and could affect your guaranteed pension and the right to unionize?

Last week I had the privilege of being in Albany and standing with fellow NYSUT members, administrators, parents and students from across New York State. We shouted, we cheered, we sang. Although we were not granted a formal sound system, I know we were heard. Megaphones in hand, Karen Magee and Andy Pallotta, with many other NYSUT leaders, spoke to us of why we were there and what we needed to do at that moment, that evening, the next day and from that time forward. Almost two thousand of us moved through the Capitol's security and onto the Million Dollar Staircase, or near it because there were too many of us for all to

fit. More and more voices were heard. The man at the "top" knew we were there but ignored us. The information above is the only the tip of the iceberg of the things I learned in Albany at the Committee of 100 and the Ed 52 meetings. Please read your NYSUT paper and anything that comes across your computer's inbox from NYSUT or ARA. Our Newsletter editor, Diana Baranec, has included a great deal of information on where to look for more information and what you need to do. Joan Perrini, our Suffolk Retiree Consultant, has an article on Suffolk's recent rally. It is reported – interestingly enough not by Newsday – that thousands attended that event.

Now is *not* the time to let someone else do the work. I have heard and read many times that the governor has declared WAR on us. It has also been said that he has declared war on Democracy itself. Finally, to quote FDR, "Let us never forget that government is ourselves and not an alien power over us. The ultimate rulers of our democracy are not a President and senators and congressmen and government officials, but the voters of this country." My fellow retirees, we are those voters.



Learn more on line:

nysut.org/allkidsneed



Every NYSUT member is needed to defend public education and the teaching profession from Gov. Cuomo's Billionaires' Agenda. Tell the governor to stop scapegoating.. stop teacher bashing and focus on what All Kids Need.

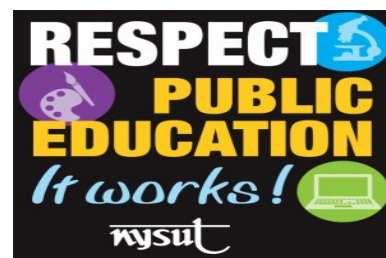
Get connected to the MAC Member Action Center

BY TEXT. Get real-time text messages about urgent news and actions by texting the word NYSUT to the number 38470.

BY EMAIL. Subscribe to the NYSUT Member Action Center email alerts for updates on this campaign. If you're registered via email as a NYSUT MAC e-activist you'll also be the first to know about upcoming rallies, protests and more.

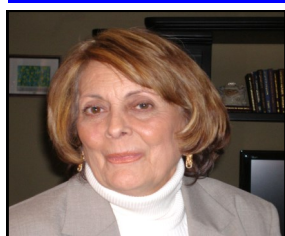
BY APP. Download the NYSUT MAC App for your iPhone or for your Android phone. Be sure notifications are enabled to receive alerts on new action items.

Wear the button Gov. Cuomo prohibited at his recent public appearances. Seriously.



Our President, Louisa Eiermann, has ordered these buttons and will distribute them at General Meetings. When you meet people make sure to start a conversation about our need for support of public education in New York State.

Learn more at www.nysut.org/allkidsneed



NYSUT NOTES

Joan Perrini, NYSUT Retiree Services Consultant
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Our Schools... Our Community... Our Voice

A Local Rally to Fight the War for Teachers and Public Education

On March 10 over 3,000 people – parents, teachers, school superintendents, Board of Education members, students and community groups – met at the Saxton Middle School in Patchogue, New York, to protest the poor implementation of Common Core, the severe over-testing of students, the lack of funding for public schools in general, and the Governor's desire to increase charter schools. The crowd was so large that traffic on Sunrise Highway was backed up from Nichols Road to Route 112.

Teachers insist that the Common Core tests do not reflect the curriculum and the appropriate learning level of the child. More time is needed to implement the Common Core successfully, not in the hasty and

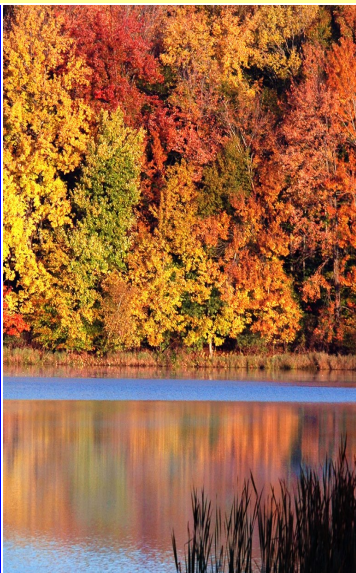
overly structured manner now used. Our children are being over-tested, leaving very little time for classroom creativity and student interest, they are frustrated by tests that are beyond their grade level comprehension and they are not able to be successful on the tests because they have not covered the correct curriculum. Some teachers spoke about abandoning lessons that used to be part of their daily plans because of the regimentation of Common Core with test scores almost designed to have students fail. Further, persons who grade the tests are forbidden to speak about them, so teachers have no way of challenging inappropriate questions. Ultimately the test does not become a tool for learning for the child, only a statistical device.

School Superintendents spoke clearly about the lack of funding and how the Governor and the Board of Regents are taking education out of the hands of educators and the community. Mr. Cuomo is more concerned with talking to the corporate world and hedge funds than he is with talking to the people who are involved in the welfare of the children and in charge of the care of those children. As an aside, it was mentioned that only one member of the entire New York State Board of Regents sent his child to public school. What does this say about the people who are in charge of educational reform in New York State? They also voiced concern about the lack of funding for public schools and how the tax cap (*continued on page 6*)

Benefits Committee Scheduled Trips for 2015



June 1, 2015	Snug Harbor, Staten Island
October 15, 2015	Essex Steam Train & Boat Ride
August, 2015	Billy Elliott in August at the Gateway
December 2, 2015 to December 4, 2015	Nemours, Winterthur, Longwood Gardens, Peddlers Village Trip
Flyers for all of the above trips will be available at the General Meetings Starting in March.	



The Benefits committee is looking into more trips for 2016, including:

- TheCloisters
Bear Mountain
Montauk Light House
Water Tour of local light houses
- 9/11 museum
Fall Winery tour
St. John the Divine

If you have any other suggestions or if you want to join the committee, let us know by joining us at our General Meetings or by writing to: Simonne Harkavy, 104 Raleigh Lane, West Islip, NY 11795.

Health Insurance Information

Anthem experienced a security breach. Since our Empire plan is administered by them our information (non-medical and non-credit card) may have been compromised. They are working with AllClear ID to offer 24 months of identity theft repair and credit monitoring services to affected plan members.

If you need identity repair assistance, the service is automatically available to you with no enrollment required. If a problem arises, simply call 877-263-7995. Call centers are open Monday to Saturday from 9 a.m. to 9p.m. ET.

For additional protection, and at no cost, you may also enroll in the AllClear PRO service at any time during the 24 month coverage period. This service includes credit monitoring and identity theft insurance policy. You can enroll at <https://anthem.allclearid.com> or www.anthemfacts.com.

Those without internet access or who prefer assistance via telephone can call 877-263-7995

Remember you will not be contacted by phone or email so do not give any information to anyone who claims to represent Anthem or Blue Cross Blue Shield.

They will contact you by mail only.

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A Publication of NYSUT Retiree Council 21

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Simonne Harkavy, 2nd VP
- Richard Walters, Treasurer Benefits Fund
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Contact/ us at:
(631) 587 - 1151

And visit us at:
ny.aft.org/rc21
Mike Eiermann - Webmaster

Forward changes in addresses/names to NYSUT and/or your local President

How Much Aid Has Your District Lost?

For years, New York has ignored the landmark decision in the Campaign for Fiscal Equality lawsuit, when the state's highest court ordered the state to provide the school funding necessary to fulfill its constitutional obligation to public school children. Gov. Cuomo's latest budget proposal is just more of the same, further delaying what's due for schools statewide. The table below has the numbers for the districts within RC 21.

To find out specifically how much your school district has lost, go to mac.nysut.org/schools. They say all politics is local, so make sure to share these local numbers with your elected representatives.

	Foundation Aid Owed	GEA (Gap Elimination Adjustment) Owed	Total
Bay Shore	19,991,105	3,316,763	23,307,868
Bayport-Blue Point	1,384,248	1,620,975	3,005,223
Brentwood	117,170,605	2,252,058	119,422,663
Central Islip	33,523,764	2,334,375	35,858,139
Connetquot	0	4,935.274	4,935,274
East Islip	0	3,253,919	3,253,,919
Islip	2,217,823	2,169,160	4,386,983
West Islip	892,181	3,190,149	4,082,330
Sayville	0	2,746,932	2,746,932
TOTAL OWED IN RC 21 DISTRICTS	\$175,179,726	\$25,819,605	\$200,999,331

Medicare Turns 50 Years Old in 2015: A Blast from the Past from President Carter
“Every advance in this half-century--Social Security, civil rights, Medicare, aid to education, one after another--came with the support and leadership of American Labor.” (Jimmy Carter, 1978)

Cuomo Baloney

Governor Cuomo says our teacher evaluation system is “baloney” because the results did not fit into his preconceived notions. Instead of applauding the results that show more than 90% of our teachers are effective, he wants to rig the evaluations so that at least 15 to 20% of our colleagues will be labeled ineffective. Does he read newspapers which show our students winning prestigious awards in science and the arts? His attitude seems to demand a certain level of failure rather than a certain level of success.

In my opinion his bully tactics just go to prove

that he is interested in privatizing education so that big business can profit, rather than working with dedicated educators to get the best public education system possible. Holding school districts (trying to plan their budgets for the next school year) hostage to his desire to dictate educational changes is indefensible. His changes will weaken public education in favor of private charter schools called public because they siphon money from our own public school classrooms. Governor Cuomo, this seems like a lot of “baloney” to me.

(Diana Baranec - Spotlight 21 editor)

An open letter to Governor Cuomo from 7 NYS Teachers of the Year

Dear Governor Cuomo,

We are teachers. We have given our hearts and souls to this noble profession. We have pursued intellectual rigor. We have fed students who were hungry. We have celebrated at student weddings and wept at student funerals. Education is our life. For this, you have made us the enemy. This is personal.

Under your leadership, schools have endured the Gap Elimination Adjustment and tax cap, which have caused layoffs and draconian cuts across the state. Classes are larger and support services are fewer, particularly for our neediest students.

We have also endured a difficult rollout of the Common Core Standards. A reasonable implementation would have started the new standards in kindergarten and advanced those standards one grade at a time. Instead, the new standards were rushed into all grades at once, without any time to see if they were developmentally appropriate or useful.

Then our students were given new tests—of questionable validity – before they had a chance to develop the skills necessary to be successful. These flawed tests reinforced the false narrative that all public schools – and therefore all teachers – are in drastic need of reform. In our many years of teaching, we’ve never found that denigrating others is a useful strategy for improvement.

Now you are doubling down on test scores as a proxy for teacher effectiveness. The state has focused on test scores for years and this approach has proven to be fraught with peril. Testing scandals erupted. Teachers who questioned the validity of the tests were given gag orders. Parents in wealthier districts hired test-prep tutors, which exacerbated the achievement gap between rich and poor.

Beyond these concerns, if the state places this much emphasis on test scores who will ever teach our neediest students? Will you assume that the teachers in wealthier districts are highly effective and the teachers in poor districts are ineffective, simply based on test scores?

Most of us have a test or two along life’s path. From those results, can we conclude that our teachers were ineffective? We must understand the value of collecting data, but it must be interpreted wisely. Using test score as 50 percent of a teacher’s evaluation does not meet this criterion.

Your other proposals are also unlikely to succeed. Merit pay, charter schools and increased scrutiny of teachers won’t work because they fundamentally misdiagnose the problem. It’s not that teachers or schools are horrible. Rather, the problem is that students with an achievement gap also have an income gap, a health-care gap, a housing gap, a family gap and a safety gap, to name a few. If we truly want to improve educational outcomes, these are issues that must be addressed.

Much is right in public education today. We invite you to visit our classrooms and see for yourself. Most teachers, administrators and school board members are doing quality work. Our students and alumni have accomplished great things. Let’s stop the narrative of systemic failure.

Instead, let’s talk about ways to help the kids who are struggling. Let’s talk about addressing the concentration of poverty in our cities. Let’s talk about creating a culture of family so that our weakest students feel emotionally connected to their schools. Let’s talk about fostering collaboration between teachers, administrators and elected officials; it is by working together, not competing for test scores, that we will advance our cause.

None of these suggestions are easily measured with a number two pencil, but they would work.

On behalf of the teachers across the state, these are our kids, we love them, and this is personal.

Steve Bongiovi, 2006; Liz Day, 2005; Ashley Dreher, 2014; Katie Ferguson, 2012; Marguerite Izz, 2007; Rich Ogibene, 2008; Jeff Pension, 2011

(Our Schools continued from page 2)
is harming public education without any additional state aid to back it up. Currently, the only way to override the tax cap is with a 60% vote of the community. They believe that the Governor has taken away local control from their communities.

Parents had their own concerns. They spoke about how frustrated their children are by these poorly designed tests and misleading questions which they believe are designed for inevitable failure. They have seen their children become ill, nervous and worried about the tests. Where children had previously loved going to school, they are now apprehensive about taking these tests. One

parent of a handicapped child told the group about her daughter's extreme level of frustration and even though she was given extended time, it only seemed to add to her frustration. Many parents have exercised their right to have their children opt out of taking these tests.

And finally, one young elementary student talked about his admiration for his teacher and his feeling that his teacher should not be judged by test scores. Though I'm paraphrasing his closing statement, it went something like this: "Save a child. Save a teacher. Refuse to take the Common Core test."

The Forum was truly a show of unity for public education and unani-

mous disapproval of the Governor's current position on the subject. The Governor is seen not as an education reformer but an education opportunist. He wants the public schools to fail so they can be replaced by charter schools. Our students are not failing Common Core tests; Common Core tests are failing our students. We're spending more time testing children for what they don't know instead of what they do. The mood of the crowd was evident. All of these people really cared about the future of the children and the future of education in New York State. So many people with the same arguments coming together can be a very powerful force

**RC 21 Meeting
Dates 2015**

General Membership
West Islip Public Library
Higbie Lane/Montauk Hwy.
10:15 - 12 noon

April 28, 2015
May 19, 2015
June 23, 2015 Awards Luncheon

Executive Board Meetings
NYSUT Office
150 Motor Pkwy, Hauppauge
(Citibank Building)
10:15 - 12 noon

April 7, 2015 Speaker: Fran La Duca Senior Trip planner from Road Scholar
May 5, 2015
June 2, 2015



**RC 21 Calendar
2015**

Upcoming Events

May 13- 19, 2015
Smoky Mountains & Bluegrass
Contact :
Joan Perrini
WITA/RC21
141 John Street - Suite 400
Babylon, NY 11702
(Not endorsed by NYSUT)

June 1, 2015
Snug Harbor on Staten island

June 23, 2015
Awards Luncheon

August, 2015
Billy Elliot @ Gateway Theater

October 15, 2015
Essex Steam Train & Boat Ride
(People from planned 2014 trip get first choice)

December 2 - 4, 2015
Nemours, Winterthur, Longwood Gardens,
Peddlers Village Trip

Committee is Researching

Cloisters
St. John the Divine
9/11 Museum

Get details & registration forms online at
our website:
<http://rc21.ny.aft.org>

and at General Membership Meetings
Reservations accepted on a first-come basis.

FINANCIAL RESOURCES AT YOUR FINGERTIPS

NYSUT Member Benefits is excited to launch its newly created online Financial Planning Center to assist NYSUT members & their families with making a variety of important financial decisions.



Whether you have questions about retirement planning, saving for college or considering purchasing a home, the Financial Planning Center offers valuable tools & resources to assist you. Take the time to check out everything this new section of our website has to offer and remember to bookmark it as we will continue to offer new items on a regular basis.

**This unique resource provides
NYSUT members with free access to the following:**

- | | |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Financial calculators• An interactive planning module• Customized Kiplinger's retirement newsletter | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Kiplinger's Annual Retirement Guide• 403(b) Field Guide• Preventive Law Guides• And more to come |
|---|---|

To access the NYSUT Member Benefits Financial Planning Center, visit the Member Benefits website at memberbenefits.nysut.org and click on "Financial Planning Center."



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.

Mar./Apr. '15