

THE PENDULUM



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NOVEMBER 7, 2017: A DATE THAT COULD LIVE IN INFAMY

BY DARRELL KUHN

November 7, 2017, Election Day, could be public education's Pearl Harbor in New York State. That is the day New York voters can approve of a state Constitutional Convention, which could put public education's future in dire jeopardy.

According to the New York State United Teachers website, under the State Constitution, every 20 years the people are asked a question on the voting ballot: "Shall there be a convention to revise the (state) constitution

and amend the same?"

The state constitution, the NYSUT website states, sets the most important policy goals for New York State residents, and has an impact on every other law currently in place and on future statutes. After a 1967 convention, the NYSUT website states, voters denied the proposed changes that included the repeal of the "Blaine Agreement," which prohibits the use of state monies to assist religious schools. Had this repeal been accepted, the NYSUT website explains, public education in New York would look very different.

State voters turned down a constitutional convention in 1997.

According to information obtained by Newburgh Teachers Association President Stacy Moran, the state constitution establishes a basic organizational structure for state government. If changes are made that give too much power to one branch, the executive branch for example, then our sys-

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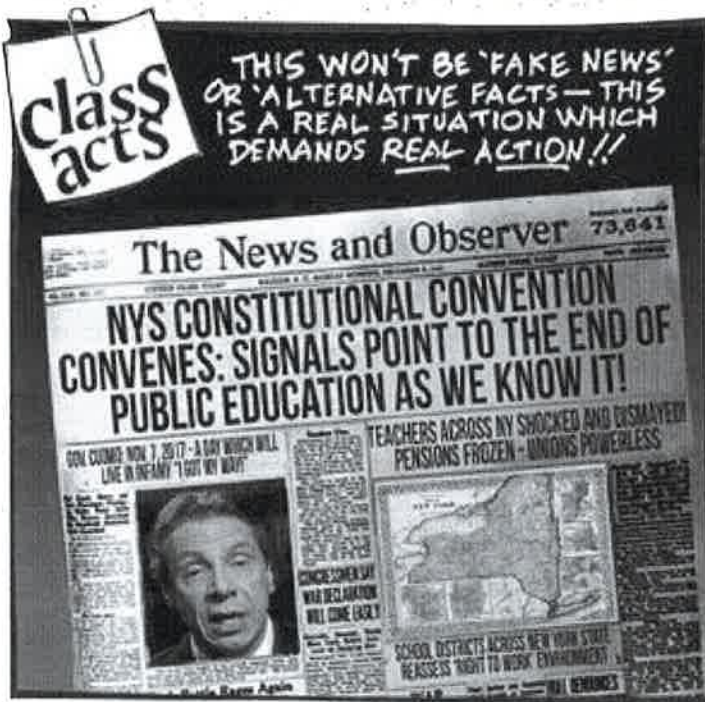
WILLIAM G. REILLY PROFILE IN UNIONISM AWARD AND TENURE RECOGNITION DINNER

BY MATT BARBERO

The William G. Reilly Profile in Unionism Award and Tenure Recognition Dinner was held on December 9, 2016, at the Spruce Lodge in Montgomery, NY. The annual dinner has been a time when Newburgh Teachers Association delegates gather for their monthly meeting, recognize newly tenured teachers, present the William G. Reilly Profile in Unionism Award, and enjoy the holiday spirit.

The focal point of the celebration was to honor Rachel Martinez, the NTA Substitute Teachers' Chapter Chairperson, and to bestow upon her the William G. Reilly Profile in Unionism Award for her accomplishments over the past ten years as a substitute teacher in the Newburgh Enlarged City School District, as well as her work with the NTA. After the formalities were over, I spent time with Rachel discussing her accomplishments both as a teacher in Newburgh, as well as her hard work as an outstanding union member and chairperson of the substitute teachers' chapter.

Receiving a Bachelor of Arts degree in History from the Newburgh campus of the Empire State College, Rachel is in her tenth year of substitute teaching, and hopes to do this for as long as she can. Rachel's work as an NTA representative began when she had an incident with a principal while substitute teaching. Not knowing that



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NEW YORK STATE CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION: NOV. 7, 2017 – A DAY THAT COULD LIVE IN INFAMY

from cover

"NEW YORK STATE COULD DECIDE IT WILL NO LONGER PROVIDE FREE PUBLIC EDUCATION," COSTABILE SAID.

"UNIONS CAN BE DISSOLVED AND WE COULD BECOME A RIGHT-TO-WORK STATE, WHICH MEANS THE RIGHT-TO-WORK FOR A LOT LESS."

JEN COSTABILE- HEAD DELEGATE, NFA

right to a free public education, prohibiting reductions in public pension benefits, rights to workers' compensation, rights to union membership and collective bargaining, and requiring the state to provide for social welfare needs.

Jen Costabile, the NTA's head delegate at Newburgh Free Academy, said a constitutional convention could result in the loss of a pension for union retirees and the loss of public education altogether.

"New York State could decide it will no longer provide free public education," Costabile said. "Unions can be dissolved

tem of representative governance will be upended. Moran's information points out that the state constitution establishes the fundamental rights we enjoy as New York citizens and public employees. Some of those rights include the guaranteed

and we could become a right-to-work state, which means the right-to-work for a lot less."

Costabile explained that a constitutional convention is not merely about money for unionized teachers. It could also mean that public school educators might not have a professional voice in education.

"It could drastically alter our work conditions, with no adherence to health and safety standards and work hours, making a contract unnecessary," Costabile explained. "We couldn't advocate for our students without a voice. We would be turning back time to the early 1900's."

According to Moran's information, New York voters rejected the constitutional convention's call in 1997 because several groups banded together to convince voters that holding a convention was not the right move for New York State. Those groups, according to Moran, included public and private organized labor, environmentalists and conservationists, advocates for public education at all levels, social welfare advocates,

fiscal conservatives who wanted to keep existing state debt limits in place, and other government watchdog groups that did not want to spend millions of dollars to hold such

a convention in Albany.

In order to prevent a constitutional convention in this day and age, these groups and more must work together again.

Costabile believes a constitutional convention could happen if people do not take a stand against it starting now.

"Building delegates need to educate their members about these ominous possibilities that could affect the very existence of our careers," Costabile said. "We need to get active, unified, and aware of who the enemy is. Teachers need to realize we have a common enemy in Albany and in some local jurisdictions."

WILLIAM G. REILLY AWARD cont.

substitute teachers were represented by the NTA, Martinez began to delve further into the particulars of union representation.

Looking at her position as the Substitute Teachers' Chapter Chairperson, Martinez finds that the most challenging part of her job is the




NTA PRESIDENT STACY MORAN AND NTA SUBSTITUTE TEACHERS' CHAPTER CHAIRPERSON RACHEL MARTINEZ

time it takes to hear answers regarding issues brought to her by union members. Many of our members understand this issue particularly well when a grievance has been filed.

Always accentuating the positive nature of our profession, as well as the nature of our work here in Newburgh, we discussed the past, present, and future of teaching. We also talked about unionism. Reminiscing about her favorite assignments over the years, Rachel mentioned how she has most enjoyed her time substituting as a Spanish teacher, as well as co-teaching with Mr. Marino and Mr. Graham at Heritage Middle School.

As the evening's activities wound down, our discussion drifted to a more personal nature. We all know that our personal lives and our work lives often pull us in different directions, but Rachel seems to successfully balance her hectic work schedule with her role as a mother to her fourteen-year-old son, Julian. I look forward to seeing Rachel over the course of this school year as well as many years to come.






NEWBURGH TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION

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NTA HAPPENINGS

 Events that have happened and will happen!

What: NTA GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING
Where: NFA MAIN AUDITORIUM
When: THURS. MARCH 16th 4:30 pm

What: NTA BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING
Where: NTA OFFICES - 52 Pierces Road
When: WED. MARCH 22th 4:30 pm

What: NTA DELEGATE ASSEMBLY
Where: NTA OFFICES - 52 Pierces Road
When: WED. MARCH 29th 4:30 pm

What: SHOW YOUR UNION PRIDE & LOVE OF PUBLIC EDUCATION DAY
When: THURS. MARCH 30th 4:30 pm

What: NTA LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE
Where: NTA OFFICES - 52 Pierces Road
When: SAT. APRIL 1st 9:30 am - 2pm

What: EMPTY BOWLS MEAL
When: APRIL 6, 2017 5:30-7:30
Where: The NFA NORTH (cafe B)
**NOTE: There is a limited number of bowls available. Tickets will be sold on a first come, first serve basis. There is a \$15 donation for each meal. Make the payment in the form of a check made payable to the Food Bank of the Hudson Valley. It is tax deductible. Place your order in Becky O'Herron's or Pilar Treus' mailbox in the NFA Main Campus main office.*

CONTRACT NEGOTIATIONS- IT'S A PROCESS!

BY MATT BARBERO

On February 2, the Newburgh Teachers Association formally began negotiations with Newburgh Enlarged City School District representatives in order to secure a contract. With a contract deadline scheduled for June 30, 2017, the NTA negotiation team consisting of President Stacy Moran, Matthew Scully, Jillian Caci, Brenda Faye-Underhill, Deborah Bouley, and Jennifer Laudiero will meet with the NECSD negotiation team until an agreement is reached. Members of the NECSD team are Superintendent of Schools Dr. Roberto Padilla, Assistant Superintendent of Finance Greg Kern, and David Shaw, Esquire.

This will be Moran's third contract negotiation overall. With a great deal of experience in this matter, Moran stressed the importance of giving the NTA membership what it needs. Surveys were sent to teachers earlier in the school year to ascertain what we need in this contract.

The contract negotiation team completed the

tabulation process, with Moran reviewing every survey personally. After the survey's results were compiled, the NTA negotiation team began the process of reaching a Memorandum of Agreement that will satisfy both sides of the bargaining table. At that point, the long, drawn-out process where proposals from both sides get reviewed and debated in order

to reach a collective bargaining agreement began. Whether it's pre-existing or new, each item will be negotiated by both sides. If an agreement cannot be reached within a reasonable amount of time, then a mediator will get called in to assist in the process.

Once the negotiation team has reached an agreement, all members, active and retired, will vote on the contract. This process will be a compilation of months and sometimes even years of effort. I am sure that all NTA members hope the negotiations will be smooth and completed in a timely manner.

TWO SIMPLE QUESTIONS WERE INCLUDED IN THE SURVEY:

1. WHAT SHOULD BE CHANGED?
2. WHAT SHOULD STAY THE SAME?

GILLIBRAND SHOWS SUPPORT FOR PUBLIC EDUCATION, OPPOSED DEVOS

BY DARRELL KUHN

Contacting elected officials to urge them to support public education in New York State and beyond can be effective.

In the days before Betsy DeVos was officially appointed to serve as the new secretary of the U.S. Department of Education, I signed a Facebook petition/letter from the American Federation of Teachers that opposed her appointment. I then forwarded the signed petition/letter to U.S. Senator Kirsten Gillibrand's office via email on January 30, 2017. Gillibrand (D-New York) replied to my email on February 1, 2017, stating that she would vote "No" on DeVos' confirmation.

"Students, parents, and teachers deserve an Education Secretary whose commitment to public education and safe schools will not waver," Gillibrand's letter stated. "If public education fails, America fails, and I do not believe Mrs. DeVos shares my commitment

to a strong public education system."

Gillibrand's letter explained that under the Secretary of Education's direction, the U.S. Department of Education plays a critical role in ensuring equal access to education for every child. Our public schools, she explained, are an essential component of achieving this core tenet of American society.

"Mrs. DeVos' record on education raises serious concerns about her commitment to investing in our public education system," the letter continues. "Mrs. DeVos has neither attended nor taught in public schools, yet she has spend decades advocating for policies that would pull taxpayer dollars out of public schools and direct these funds to private schools that lack accountability and critical civil rights protections. Our focus must be on helping schools that are struggling and pushing our schools to be great, not on undermining the public education system by diminishing already-limited resources."



**US SENATOR FOR NEW YORK
KIRSTEN GILLIBRAND (D)**

VOTE COPE-AN ORGANIZATION WORKING FOR US

BY MATT BARBERO

Every two weeks when we look at our paychecks, we find ourselves examining that seemingly endless string of deductions. State and local taxes, Medicare, Social Security, health insurance, and the 403-B savings account. These are all necessities of modern living that help every member of society.

Hopefully, we look to our union dues and VOTE-COPE contributions as necessities as well. After interviews with Newburgh Teachers Association President Stacy Moran and NTA member Matt Scully regarding the contributions

alone. A country in which a substantial percentage of educational funding is spent on a voucher system which subsidizes charter and parochial schools, a system that saps valuable resources from public education, seems counter-productive to America's concept of an equitable education for all of society's members. If not for our hard-working lobbyists, we could not have made many of the gains in public education in the past, and will not be able to retain them in the future.

Over the course of my tenure as a teacher, I have heard negative comments made by some of our members regarding NYSUT dues, as well as donations to VOTE-COPE. In response to many of the misconceptions regarding such funding, Moran pointed out VOTE-COPE's rebate policy towards the NTA. With 60 percent of VOTE COPE's funding going towards lobbying efforts, a full 40 percent of our money is returned directly to the NTA to be used on the local level at our discretion. It was here that Scully outlined the uses of much of the VOTE-COPE rebate money. Phone banks, state, local, and school board elections, and Political Action Committees (PACs) have been funded directly by VOTE-COPE. To be more specific regarding the achievements of VOTE-COPE's

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and gains made by the lobbying group VOTE-COPE, I learned more in one afternoon than I had throughout twenty-two years as both a New York State United Teachers member and a VOTE-COPE contributor.

VOTE-COPE's lobbying efforts, as well as those of unions in general, are taken for granted by many of our members. The thought that collective bargaining can be swept away by right-to-work legislation may not seem part of a reality that many, if not all, of us have known throughout our lives. However, with many groups, most notably the Koch Brothers, far outspending us in lobbying efforts, many of the gains that we have worked so hard for over the years are in danger.

Think of a society where educators, school employees, and many other union members cannot earn a livable wage based on their salaries

efforts, annual phone banks, the 2013 political rally in Albany, and one of VOTE-COPE's biggest successes, the legislation limiting the 10 percent Tier 4 pension contri-

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What is VOTE-COPE?

VOTE-COPE is the Committee on Political Education, the non-partisan political action arm of New York State United Teachers. Funded entirely by voluntary contributions from members. VOTE-COPE is used to help union-backed candidates and campaign committees that support education and labor.

VOTE-COPE helps strengthen political action programs on all levels — national, state and local. To help on the local level, VOTE-COPE provides rebates to participating unions for local political action.

VOTE-COPE funds, by law, are kept separate from those of NYSUT. Decisions on the use of VOTE-COPE contributions are made by a statewide committee.

VOTE-COPE solicits and accepts only voluntary contributions. Contributions or gifts to VOTE-COPE are not tax-deductible.





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