



GNTA REPORT

Editor
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GREAT NECK TEACHERS ASSOCIATION

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A Message from the GNTA President

Sisters and Brothers,

As the 2016-17 school year draws to a close, I have been thinking about what a remarkable year it has been for the Great Neck Teachers Association and the community as a whole. After rejecting a multi-million dollar bond referendum in February, the residents of Great Neck came out in record numbers a few weeks ago to support public education by overwhelmingly approving a revised bond referendum and next year's school budget. Last December, for the first time in GNTA history, our Delegate Assembly formally endorsed a candidate running for the Great Neck Board of Education. With our support, Donna Peirez (a retired GNTA member) won a seat on the Board. And we didn't stop there. In April, we endorsed two more candidates for the Board and dozens of GNTA members joined our phone banks to call local residents in support of Rebecca Sassouni and Jeffrey Shi. Again our efforts were successful, and in the past five months we helped elect three pro-public education members to the Board of Education. Our members, and our Political Action Coordinators Michelle Sorise and Joan Greenberg, helped make this an incredible and even historic achievement that we should be very proud of.

Our newfound activism is matched by our renewed commitment to preserving and expanding our professional rights. In the past year we won a grievance against the district where an independent arbitrator determined that two of our members were indeed entitled to take several personal days for religious observance that the district had denied. Last fall, we helped in successfully settling a new contract for our Per Diem colleagues, and while our Paraprofessionals have been without a contract for almost two years, we may soon have some good news on that front as well. When our hourly members faced an unintended but painful consequence involving a change to how they were being paid, our members showed up in force, spoke truth to power, and worked with the administration to correct the issue for next year.

As the times change, GNTA must change as well. We're working hard to energize and empower our membership. To that end, we applied and were accepted into NYSUT's Local Action Project (LAP). GNTA was one of only eight locals accepted into the 2017-18 program from across New York State. Our LAP Team (Joan Greenberg, Richelle Fishler, Jennifer Snyder, Maddie Dressner, Pam Fogel, Joan Lazaunik, and I) will spend a week in Saratoga, NY next month learning new strategies to better engage our members, strengthen our political action initiatives, and expand our community outreach. Best of all, NYSUT will help us fund the new programs that we'll be devising this July in Saratoga.

Jim Daszenski, continued

This past year we made tremendous strides with our Internal Organizing Committee (IOC) who successfully ran our first ever GNTA Paint Nite. Over 40 of our members had a great time while also helping to raise money for student scholarships. The IOC, led by Cindy Pavlic, is also in the midst of a new initiative: the formation of our Member Engagement Group. The MEG consists of members from every building, yet is not a traditional committee. MEG members are in the process of being trained to be GNTA's "boots on the ground" and will be instrumental in educating our members in why we need to—and how we will—defeat the Constitutional Convention this coming November.

You've heard me say before that changes are coming, legislatively and politically, that will radically affect the way GNTA conducts its day to day business of protecting our professional rights. Everything that we've done this year—our increased activism, mobilization, and reliance on each other—are the only shelter we will have in the coming storm. I hope you have had a professionally and personally rewarding year. I hope you have a restful and restorative summer break with family and friends—you've earned it.

In solidarity,
Jim Daszenski

SUMMER OFFICE HOURS GNTA and BENEFIT TRUST

June 26 - July 7

Tuesday-Wednesday-Thursday
9 AM - 12 PM
Closed Mondays, Fridays and 7/4

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July 8 - August 14
CLOSED FOR VACATION

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August 15 - August 29
Tuesday-Wednesday-Thursday
9 AM - 12 PM

Closed Mondays and Fridays

GNTA'S RETIREES 2017



Did You Know...



Stands for Shared Decision Making Committee. The purpose of this school-based, state-mandated committee - made up of administrators, parents, teachers and students - is to improve the educational performance of all students in the school, regardless of such factors as socioeconomic status, race, sex, language background or disability.



“Any member of the teaching faculty who intends to resign shall notify the Superintendent of Schools in writing, with a copy to the building principal, at least **30** days in advance of the intended date of resignation. It shall be effective on the date specified in said notice, unless modified by mutual agreement between the teacher and the Superintendent.”

June 15th

“Each member of the teaching faculty will, insofar as possible, be notified by **June 15** of the school year of his/her probable assignment for the following year.” See Article 42F in the contract for more information.

NYSUT’s Representative Assembly

On April 7-8, NYSUT held its 45th annual Representative Assembly in Manhattan. This annual convention of almost 3,000 members is NYSUT’s highest policy-making body. GNTA was represented by eight of its members elected as delegates by our general membership last year. Here are their reports:



Senator Gillibrand welcomes the delegates

JENNIFER SNYDER

▪ *Vice President for Professional Rights & Responsibilities*

I was once again given the privilege of representing the members of the Great Neck Teachers Association at the NYSUT Representative Assembly. The RA was held in Manhattan this year and was attended by hundreds of delegates, alternates, and visitors.

At the RA, delegates participate in committees where proposed legislation is debated and then brought to the floor for all of the delegates to discuss and ultimately vote upon. It has been my pleasure to be a member of NYSUT’s Pension and Retirement committee for the past nine years. We understand that our pensions are the envy of our family and friends who are in the private sector and void of a defined benefit retirement system, but it is not only our pensions that are under attack. At this year’s RA it was Social Security and the concerns around its continuing that was being discussed.

Once again New York State Comptroller, Tom DiNapoli, addressed the delegates. Once again he assured the body that changing our state pension, one of the healthiest pension systems in the country, from a defined benefit system to a defined contribution system (401(k)) will not happen. “Not on my watch!” Comptroller DiNapoli assured the delegates. His assurance brought the delegates to our feet and caused a resounding round of applause.

This leads to my last point, and the main focus of the Pension and Retirement committee this year. That is the need to vote down the proposed Constitutional Convention (Con. Con.) this coming November. We know that there are items in the state constitution that each of us would like to see changed, but our guaranteed pension is not one, and therefore must be protected. I won’t go into all of the negatives of the state holding a Constitutional Convention here, there are plenty of forums where that will be done, but suffice it to say that we need to unite in our efforts to defeat the proposed Constitutional Convention at the polls this fall. I look forward to working in solidarity with you to make this happen.

JEFF BERNSTEIN

▪ *High School Director*

I was privileged to attend my fourth NYSUT Representative Assembly in NYC representing the GNTA. Although recent RAs have been more compressed and somewhat rushed, it is still inspiring to hear from politicians, labor leaders, and others who support public education and teacher unions. It's also great to meet and talk with others from around the state. Just being there reinforces the value and importance of the time and commitment we all put in on behalf of our members.

This RA featured a contested election for officers in addition to the voting on resolutions and proposed amendments to the bylaws and constitution.

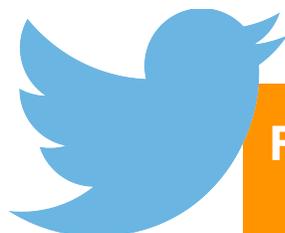
There are two main caucuses within NYSUT. The Unity Caucus is dominated by the UFT and other big city locals. The UFT is dominated by its own Unity Caucus, which requires its members to always vote as a block. The result is that UFT leadership is able to just about control the results of all voting in NYSUT. Stronger Together is led by members of many smaller locals from around the state who would like to bring greater democracy to NYSUT. The Unity Caucus slate won the election, and also were successful in defeating all proposed amendments to the NYSUT Constitution.

The process for amendments and resolutions at the RA consists of two steps. The first is a committee meeting, which discusses the resolution or amendment, and votes on a recommendation to the full RA of concurrence, non-concurrence, or to send it to the Board of Directors for further discussion. This recommendation is then presented to the full RA, where it is discussed and voted on.

This year, as last year, there were proposed amendments to the NYSUT Constitution supported by Stronger Together, as they would each provide greater local involvement in voting and selection of officers and at-large directors. Under the Constitution as it stands, only locals who can afford to send members to the triennial RA in New York City where elections are conducted, and who are present at the RA, can vote. This was highlighted this year when weather caused the cancellation of many flights into New York, and a contingent from the Buffalo area had to drive all night in bad weather in order to be present to vote. Additionally, at-large directors for each Election District within NYSUT are elected by the RA as a whole, not by the delegates within each particular ED. This current system allows the Unity Caucus, and therefore the UFT, to have significant say over the election of officers and at-large directors, and therefore the Board of Directors of NYSUT. Given the current domination by Unity and the UFT, the committee voted non-concurrence on each of the amendments in what was a much closer vote than ever before, and the amendments were then defeated on the floor of the convention. Although these amendments were defeated, the newly elected officers said that they heard the concerns of the Stronger Together caucus.

A major concern facing NYSUT is the potential loss of dues check-off and agency fees as a result of the case of Janus vs. AFSCME pending before the Supreme Court. This will be our next great challenge as a union, once we have hopefully defeated the proposed NY State Constitutional Convention. In anticipation of an adverse ruling by the Supreme Court, the most recent NYSUT Board of Directors meeting voted to hold future RAs beginning in 2019 in Albany as a one day event. This will minimize expenses, and also make the RA more accessible to the smaller locals distant from NYC, addressing one of issues raised by Stronger Together.

Respectfully submitted,
Jeff Bernstein



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Mark Your Calendar



BOE Meeting

June 19 - 8:00 p.m.
South High School

Delegate Assembly Meeting

June 28 - 4:00 p.m.
South High School

Last Day of School

June 23

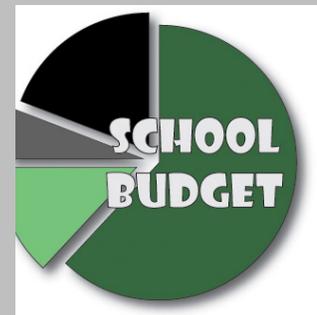
Superintendent's Conference

Day
August 30

First Day of Classes

August 31

SCHOOL BUDGET



School budget approvals across Long Island hit a history-making high on Tuesday, May 16, 2017 as voters in the region's 124 districts endorsed a combined spending total of \$12.4 billion. For the first time ever, every single budget passed on in both Nassau and Suffolk Counties. To check out data on your home district, use the link below:

<http://projects.newsday.com/databases/long-island/school-elections-2017-2018/?offset=100>

BILL TOTO

▪ *President, Retired Educators Chapter*

The 45th annual NYSUT two-day Representative Assembly convened on Friday, April 7th in NYC with a jam-packed agenda. Over 2,000 voting delegates were given the opportunity to reflect, debate and vote on 44 resolutions submitted by various NYSUT in-service locals and Retiree Councils throughout New York State. Topics ranged from education to legislation, civil and human rights, higher education, pension and retirement, and health care. The adopted resolutions set the course for NYSUT's legislative lobbyists for the next year.

I attended the Committee on Pension/Retirement. There were six resolutions to consider for recommendation at the RA General Session. All six were adopted by the committee and later by the General Assembly. One resolution urged Congress to eliminate the cap on Social Security wages. Another called for seeking the same fiduciary protections for educator (TSA/TDA) 403b plans the same as those for 401k plans. A long overdo resolution dealt with pension tier equity, especially for those who are in Tiers 5 and 6. One encouraged locals to increase retiree involvement in local initiatives; while another directed NYSUT to use legislative and legal means to protect retiree benefits and a resolution urged NYSUT to develop training for Labor Relations Specialists to include retiree issues. A crucial resolution that delegates affirmed as a top priority urged members to vote "NO" on November 7th on whether or not to hold a state constitutional convention. Included in this resolution were some of the negative ramifications affecting all of us. RA delegates also opposed four constitutional amendments: one reducing the number of officers, another dealing with regional voting by delegates who are not at the RA, a third changing the way officers and directors-at-large vacancies are filled and finally the way directors-at-large are elected.

A most informative session with State Commissioner MaryEllen Elia in the form of a Q and A discussion proved to be very popular with hardly any seats vacant in the small ballroom. There were numerous delegates lined up at two microphones for the entire hour. I felt she answered questions in a forthright manner and agreed with the many frustrations expressed. Most comments and questions related to the "educational destruction" created during the infamous John King era. The last delegate to speak thanked the commissioner for her frankness. However, she felt Elia spoke in platitudes. For more specific information, refer to page 17 in the May 2017 issue of NYSUT United.

At this RA there was an election for NYSUT officers and directors. A new team, with Andy Pallotta as President, is in place. With all the daunting issues we all face in Albany and Washington, my hope is they will continue to lead us, in unity, to fight back and fight forward.

JOAN GREENBERG

▪ *Political Action Co-Coordinator*

The RA provides an opportunity to reenergize as a collective body that shares a deep commitment to public education and unionism. NY State Comptroller Tom DiNapoli, delivered an inspirational speech which celebrated the cornerstone of a democratic society- a strong public education system and middle class. DiNapoli, a child of immigrants, earnestly shared his transformational experiences with dedicated educators in the public school system that provided him with encouragement and the tools that enabled him to be the first member in his family to graduate college. Son of a unionist, he also attributes his opportunities to the economic stability his father's union membership provided for his family. Despite the large percentage of union members in New York State, DiNapoli challenged NYSUT members to remain vigilant as the current political forces systematically seek to dismantle public education and unions. He reminds educators that we must utilize our strengths, organize, and be active members in the political process that influences public policy and directly impacts funding of public education. We need to be diligent in our efforts to unite our membership and form community coalitions. Our next mission needs to be educating the public about the constitutional vote in November. We all can be part of this process.

SANDI COOPER

▪ *South Middle BRC Co-chair*

It was a privilege to attend the NYSUT Convention on April 7 and 8 in New York. From the onset, the message of the convention was clearly the need to stay strong, and stay together to continue our fight for the education we believe so deeply in. The strength and combined effort was what we needed during these times of charter schools and Ms. DeVos!

Opening remarks, made by **Mario Cilento** President New York State AFL-CIO, served as a strong reminder that we, the labor movement, are large in number, (representing more than 2.5 million members) and strong together. True to those facts, Mr. Cilento thanked NYSUT for standing strong with the steel workers and Verizon workers through their strike, participating in picket lines all over New York. Our tireless support was critical to their fight, and was greatly appreciated.

Cilento drove home the necessity to mobilize to prevent the opening of the New York State Constitution come November. He warned that 'they' are coming for our pensions, our workers compensation and our right to due process. He reminded us as well, that while we spread the word to teachers, we should spread to others, while understanding that their concerns may be different than ours and require a different focus. What we ALL want however is for our kids to have the benefits we have had: fair pay, good health care, and increasing opportunities for advancement in their future. "It will be a fight, but it will be a fight from our hearts and NOT for our profits."

His final message, "We are family. If you pick on one, you pick on all."

