



GNTA REPORT

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Brothers and Sisters,

I was thinking of you all as I attended the Long Island Presidents Council's meeting in chilly Montauk this past weekend. It's an annual gathering of the presidents from the roughly 200 educator unions that comprise Nassau and Suffolk. For three days we participate in workshops on the NYS Retirement System, NYSUT legal updates, and the Long Island Teachers Benevolent Fund. Some quick takeaways:

The Employer Contribution Rate to the retirement system is dropping for the third year in a row. I am hopeful that the 9.8% ECR, combined with a higher than expected 1.26% Tax Cap, will not create significant stress on our school budget next year.

There has been an unsettling increase in the number of Long Island school districts using State Education Law § 913 to require teachers to have a doctor's examination in order to test their physical or mental health. I'm happy to report that this has not been the case in Great Neck, but we must remain vigilant.

Long Island Teachers Benevolent Fund Scholarships have been announced. Visit the News Blog at gnteachers.net for information.

However, the most pressing issue was the **NYS Constitutional Convention**. On Election Day this November, there will be a referendum on the ballot—as there must be every 20 years—asking voters if we should start the long and expensive process of re-writing the state's constitution. Our answer **MUST** be a resounding **NO**. If a convention is convened we put our pensions, and the pensions of those teachers who have already retired, in jeopardy. **A CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION WILL ALLOW THE STATE TO TAX OUR PENSIONS OR WORSE.**

And don't be fooled—Governor Cuomo recently said that a Constitutional Convention is needed so we can add language protecting a woman's right to have an abortion. If he's concerned with that, he can simply include a constitutional amendment on the ballot. There is **NO** need to re-write the entire constitution.

Right now, we are strategizing with our Internal Organizing Committee and our NYSUT Labor Relations Specialist on ways to better educate our members on the dangers of a Constitutional Convention. So, there is much more to come, and we will need to do more than vote **NO** ourselves. We must convince our friends, family members, neighbors, colleagues, and anyone who will listen that a Constitutional Convention is a direct threat to our financial security in retirement.

In solidarity,
Jim Daszenski
President, GNTA

Summer Scholarship Information

By Kim Semder, VP for Contract Improvement

The Great Neck Teachers Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) provides funds for summertime professional development for its members. This includes full time teachers, PPS staff, part-time teachers, hourly teachers, and nurse teachers.

This opportunity is available to help members fund courses that enhance their professional knowledge. While there must be some professional benefit derived by the teacher to justify funding for the course, the course does not have to relate to the subject area or grade level you teach/serve. Administration courses, however, cannot be funded. In March, be on the lookout for an email from Kim Semder with more info. Completed applications must be submitted no later than 4/25.



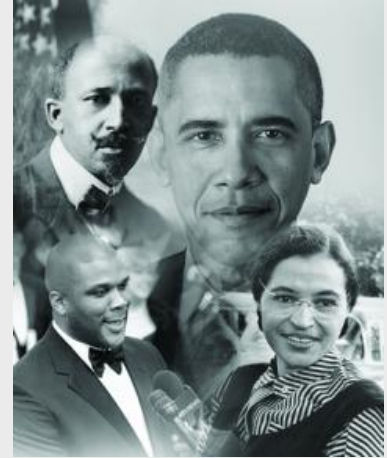
The amount of scholarship funding that you receive may vary from year to year depending upon the number of teachers applying. The Summer Scholarship Committee has worked to fund first-time applicants at 100% of the cost of the course in the past. Unfortunately, as we have more and more new teachers in Great Neck, this is not always possible.

Upon completion of your coursework, it is the applicant's responsibility to supply the Summer Scholarship Committee with an official statement of exact tuition cost, documentation of course completion, proof of payment, receipt of payment and an original claim form in order to receive reimbursement.

Please note that an award from the summer scholarship committee does not mean automatic approval for credit from the Inservice Institute. We sincerely hope that our teaching faculty will take advantage of the opportunity to engage in professional growth and development through this truly unique Summer Scholarship

Our newest Board of Education member, Donna Peirez, invites the membership to reach out with any ideas, concerns and comments. Her email address is donnapeirez@gmail.com.

February is Black History Month



This February, enhance your [Black History Month lesson planning](#) with Share My Lesson's expanded collection. You'll find lessons, worksheets and activities to teach your preK-12 students about key events and individuals whose accomplishments continue to influence us today - including resources related to the new National Museum of African American History & Culture in Washington, DC.



SAVE THE DATE

Board of Education
Monday, February 13
Cumberland School

Ours is a problem in which deception has become organized and strong; where truth is poisoned at its source; one in which the skill of the shrewdest brains is devoted to misleading a bewildered people.

- Walter Lipmann

Did You Know...



Is shorthand for **C**ontract **I**mprovement **C**ommittee. CIC is comprised of some members of our Executive Board and two GNTA members selected by each building's BRC. CIC elicits feedback from GNTA members and then, based on that information, debates and writes the proposals that go to our Delegate Assembly for consideration.



That “upon 60 days prior written notice, or less where medically warranted, child care leave of up to two consecutive years plus the balance of the semester during which the leave commences shall be granted.” See Article 33 in the contract for more information.

March 31

The date by which your prescription co-pay claim must be submitted to Daniel Cook, the company that administers the Benefit Trust Fund for the Great Neck Teacher's Association. For more information, please visit the [GNTA website](#).

Getting to know Your Internal Organizing Committee (IOC)

by Cindy Pavlic, IOC Chair

The Internal Organizing Committee (IOC) was created two years ago with the purpose of increasing GNTA membership involvement and building bridges with the community and from within the GNTA as well. This year the IOC is stronger than ever, with 13 committee members, with each building having representation, that volunteer their time and effort to promoting the committee's mission. Among our achievements thus far was a Book Drive that the IOC organized for CLASP and COPAY of Great Neck, which generated over 300 books donated by the membership for the amazing students who take part in these incredible programs.

In terms of “internal organizing”, the IOC, in collaboration with the Political Action Committee (PAC) and the Executive Board, will be assisting with educating our membership on specific political implications such as, future rulings of Supreme Court cases and their impacts to public education with regards to educators, our students, and unions.

In an effort to build a stronger community within the GNTA, a goal of the IOC has been to bring members from various buildings together throughout the year. After surveying our members interests, we came up with our first ever Paint Nite Event for Thursday, February 9th at 4:30pm at Hurricanes Wings and Grill on Stewart Avenue in Garden City. The event quickly SOLD OUT, and five dollars from every registration will benefit the GNTA scholarship fund so that our students can attend the summer enrichment program. This has been a venture that the IOC has been trying to get going for the past two years, as we know that there are students who could truly benefit from the program and cannot afford to. If we missed you this time, keep your eyes open for our next memorable team-building event!

In closing, anyone can participate in and help with the IOC. Reach out to representatives in your buildings and check the GNTA website regularly for updates on future endeavors that include more activities for our membership.

Stay tuned and keep informed.



Political Action Update

by Michelle Sorise & Joan Greenberg



On Saturday January 21st more than 1 million people gathered around the country (5 million worldwide) to stand against derogatory anti-women and anti-minority rhetoric. This incredibly unifying and positive event is a great demonstration of the impact a group of people can have when we stand together in solidarity. It is important we continue this movement to defend public education on all levels: federal, state and local

John Flanagan, NY Senate District 2 representative, wrote a letter to the Chairman of HELP in support of Betsy DeVos. He represents Centereach, Commack, Coram, Deer Park, Dix Hills, East Northport, East Setauket, Farmingville, Fort Salonga, Greenlawn, Hauppauge, Huntington, Huntington-Station, Kings Park, Lake Grove, Lake Ronkonkoma, Medford, Melville, Nesconset, Northport, Port Jefferson, Port Jefferson Station, Ronkonkoma, South Setauket, Selden, Setauket, Smithtown, St. James and Stony Brook.

[TAKE ACTION NOW- Let Senator Flanagan know that he needs to speak on behalf of his constituents and support Public Education!](#)

State Initiative:

[Educate yourself and others about the 2017 Constitutional Convention Vote!](#) The state constitution protects rights such as pension benefits and the right to unionize. Be sure to vote NO to open up the state constitution in November 2017.

Attend a Board of Education Meeting:

The upcoming meeting is February 13th at 8PM at the Cumberland Adult Center. This is a wonderful opportunity to share ideas, meet with friends, and get to know new GNTA members. Our presence at these meetings is essential to our continued visibility to the community and the importance of our participation in and knowledge of the district decision-making process. Please wear your GNTA shirt to the meeting.

THE WOMEN'S MARCH ON WASHINGTON, DC

by Jennifer Hastings

After attending the Women's March on January 21 in DC, I am overwhelmed with gratitude and feel compelled to share it with everyone.

The conditions in Washington DC were ripe for chaos and frustration. Though approximately 200,000 people were expected, more than half a million came. The streets were crowded, the rally speakers were unhearable to most, and people were generally confused by what to do and where to go—at first. At several points throughout the morning, all I could see in any direction was a sea of people in pink hats. While under typical circumstances this situation would have made me anxious and possibly angry, I felt calm and connected. The energy radiating from everyone was kind, loving, accepting. As the march itself began, this energy increased with every step. People of every age, size, color, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, and ability filled the streets of DC with kindness and acceptance. As police officers drove past, the marchers erupted into applause. As marchers passed members of the armed services, they shook their hands, gave high fives, and said thank you. As children sat atop their parents' shoulders, they led chant after chant, some of them close to losing their voices. And as I absorbed as much of this positivity as I could, I became overwhelmed with gratitude and hope.

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I am grateful:

That I was able to attend this event and represent those who were unable to for whatever reason.

For my husband who supported by decision to attend and my friends who made the journey with me.

To NYSUT and GNTA for providing transportation and encouragement.

For all the people who attended the march and treated each other with kindness, courtesy, and respect.

To live in a country where this march was possible. I look forward to continuing this journey with all of you.

AT THE RESTAURANT "THE UNION OF CAPITAL AND LABOUR"



— This gentleman will pay for everything!



Being a member of a union is more than just a matter of pride, it's about protections and results. Here are some of the rights and benefits you enjoy because you belong to the union:

- A defined benefit pension system
- Limits on the number and size of classes
- Defense of tenure and other due process rights



NYSTRS Saratoga Convention RECAP

Frank Bua, Luci Legotti and Jeff Bernstein joined more than 700 delegates, alternates and visitors at the Nov. 6-7 conference at the Saratoga Springs City Center. A quick recap:

Jolene T. DiBrango of the Pittsford Central School District was re-elected to a three-year term on the 10-member Retirement Board. NYSTRS delegates and alternates attended a variety of seminars that covered topics ranging from NYSTRS benefits to keeping your personal information secure.

Delegates took part in a question-and-answer period with the NYSTRS Board and staff.

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Below you will find hyperlinks to take you to the presentations that we attended. There is some incredibly valuable information contained within these PowerPoints!:

[Service & Salary: What's Includable in Your Benefit and What's Not? Social Security Information](#)

[What's New at NYSTRS?](#)

[Wondering What Retirement Will Be Like as a NYSTRS Member?](#)

[Communication Is Key](#)

[Ensuring Your Personal Information Is Secure](#)

[NYSTRS' Strength: A Picture Is Worth a Thousand Words](#)

Remember, the GNTA is your local union -- we are NOT retirement experts. Develop your own [NYSTRS account](#) by clicking the hyperlink. It's easy; you just need your NYSTRS Employee ID number!

Visit GNTA on the Web:
www.gnteachers.net