



NOV/DEC

2019



Professionals Who Care

“The Mother of All Wars?”

Strong words – not ours! Actually, according to Jane Mayer, in her must read for all of us who participate in the democratic process, **“Dark Money”**, this was the rally cry for a group of extremely wealthy anti-union billionaires as they approached the 2012 presidential campaign. Unfortunately, their strategy of using hidden sources of millions of dollars by creating patriotic named Political Action Committees (PACS) in support of their anti-union agenda has become very successful. According to thought.com, their network includes 10 anti-union advocacy in New York State. Their names, and mission statements often seem innocuous at first glance but their agenda is often clearly anti-tenure, anti-pension and clearly anti-union.

Who are they waging war against? What proof to we have? Each and every one of us as unions seem to be a serious threat to their sphere of influence. In fact they have been so aggressive in their attacks that many union leaders have labeled them full frontal – sadly, military jargon seems to be in vogue these days. Incredibly, some so-called “free market” groups have launched campaigns aimed at persuading teachers to opt out of their unions – post Janus of course. National as well as state affiliate unions point out that many of these organizations attempt to access union members email addresses in order to then “My Pay, My Say,” the Mackinac Center’s (supported with contributions by the **Betsey Devos**, the current Federal Secretary of Education, has been contacting teachers in 11 states. Another advocacy group, the Freedom Foundation has trained and deployed canvassers to help “shrink union ranks as much as possible!” We are fortunate, that Governor Cuomo, who has become a supporter of educators and their unions, has signed an executive order preventing state entities from disclosing the contact information of all public employees – including teachers. (VOTE COPE \$’s at work.)

What is the remedy? NYSUT’S annual VOTE/COPE DRIVES, when combined with the dedication and resilience of our union members, can be a potent force. Fortunately, unionism in our state does not seem to be too wounded by the Supreme Court Janus decision (declaring agency illegal), that was just one case in which the wealthy corporate interests could not only seriously disrupt but eventually destroy our union. Thankfully, due to a concentrated effort by NYSUT and the Long Island locals, 100% of our members have committed to our union. Important: You must be a member of our union to be able to contribute to VOTE/COPE through payroll deduction – the preferred method.

What is the best case scenario for now? Our goal is to have 100% of our members contribute \$20 or more by payroll deduction. We cannot emphasize the importance of helping NYSUT maintain a healthy war chest of funds used to support political candidates who support education – in some cases, regardless of their position on other issues that may be in conflict with our own beliefs. It no doubt can be challenging but we always say: VOTE YOUR JOB! As NYS Comptroller, **Tom DiNapoli** said to the media yesterday, “It takes big money to run for statewide office!” Thanks to NYSUT’s VOTE/COPE CAMPAIGNS, 1.4 million dollars was used to support candidates who support us!

What’s next?

We will continue to prepare for battle to protect our hard fought for and well deserved benefits. A successful 2019 WSBFA VOTE/COPE DRIVE will help get us join the charge. We are eligible for up to 40% in rebates of the total amount that we raise. This money is used to fund our VOTE COPE activities including participating in NYSUT’s Annual BOCES Lobby Day event. We will also continue to work with Chief Operating Officer, Mike Flynn who continues to develop a solid rapport with our local legislators – so critical to the health and well-being of our BOCES and our union.

OUR BATTLE CRY: VOTE COPE KEEPS US EMPLOYED!

“OOPS!” – Proving that a few members do actually read the LINK (lol), please note the following corrections: our 2019 Friend of Education, **Laurie DiScalfani** is employed as a Coordinator – similar to her title when she last worked full time. Laurie remains a dues paying member of our association. In addition, the Blood Drive Student Scholarship winners were **Alishia Glace** and **Samantha Correa**.

PSLF Update – By now, you should have received a notice about the AFT Student Loan Debt Clinic given by **Chris Golf** at AFT, Director of Higher Education on Wednesday, November 20th at 31 Lee Avenue, Wheatley Heights in the large conference room at 3:30 pm. To attend our Student Debt Clinic, you must RSVP to Lisa at the union office 631-586-2657 or email lisa@wsbfa.org. Registration is first come, first serve, and we must cap attendance for a single clinic in order to ensure we are able to provide maximum assistance to attendees. As we have explained in past issues, the public service loan forgiveness program remains a challenge. To date, only 1% of those eligible have received the appropriate forgiveness amount. As we have stated previously, the three most important requirements appear to be: (1) It must be a Direct Federal Loan (2) You must be enrolled in an income based payment plan (3) You must make consecutive payments for ten years (120 payments). Important: Based on our research, things can get very complicated if you seek any type of forbearance – halting payments even though you resume them later. Our advice continues to be that you need to be your own advocate. As with all financial matters, we recommend that our members seek the advice of the professionals. Our primary goal is to make you aware of the PSFL Program and to strongly emphasize that you constantly monitor the re-payment schedule – even if you have it automatically deducted from your bank account. In cases that have had some negative repercussions, impacted individuals have had to provide all the necessary documentation that they were not only eligible and had the right loan, but made 120 consecutive income based payments, (All worth repeating, more than once.) *Just because you have the right federal loan it doesn't mean that you should assume forgiveness will be automatic. It is probably a good idea to attend this clinic to ask any questions that you might have.*

Health & Safety Update – **Vice President, Larry Cimino** recently attended a health and safety workshop and sent the following message to the WSBFA health and safety committee members: “I recently attended a health and safety workshop titled, ‘How to Conduct a Building Walk Through’. The workshop was held at the East Meadow High School. One of the presenters was our NYSUT Health and Safety Specialist, **Ms. Wendy Hord**. The “walk through” was specific to the programs inside this particular high school. However, the process and procedures can be applied to many of our WSBFCES programs/buildings. This workshop has widened my H&S perspective within my own building. I hope that this power point can be helpful to you in your programs/buildings as well. If anyone has any H&S information, questions, concerns, please share and inform.”

Blood Drive: According to **Holly Michels, Unit 1 Vice President and Mary Brooks, Alliance President**, co-chairs of our three annual blood drives, our second Blood Drive will be held in February, date to be determined. We thank each of you in advance for contributing to this life saving cause.

Auditing Committee – As per the WSBFA Constitution, our local’s auditing committee is scheduled to review our financial records in May, 2019. We thank the following members for being willing to serve on this important committee: **Nick Catti, Larry Cimino, Ester Moy and Bruce Spivak**.

APPR – In reviewing the legislative accomplishments with COO Mike Flynn we all agree that the repeal of APPR – linking teacher evaluations to students’ scores on certain standardized tests – was worth every penny we raised for NYSUT’s 2018 VOTE COPE DRIVE. Most important in terms of value for our dollar: according to Newsday, “this repeal was not only a high – profile issue in the 2018 legislative session in Albany but also a factor in union campaign spending to end Republican control of the Senate.”

In closing, we simply cannot emphasize enough the clear and present dangerous threats to the very existence of our union: The creation of more charter schools, continued attacks on tenure and attempts to restructure our pensions remain a threat that will not go away anytime soon. We must take arms against this sea of troubles (Shakespeare - sound familiar?) The ARMS? VOTE COPE of course. Please contribute to VOTE COPE BY PAYROLL DEDUCTION. **We can't cope without you.** On behalf of Ernie, Mary and the Executive Boards, **we will wish each and every one of you a Happy Thanksgiving.**

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Officers WSBFA: Ernie Lewis, President; Devon Anderson, Executive Vice President; Holly Michels, First Vice President; Larry Cimino, Vice President; Jennifer Somma-Coughlin, Vice President; Phyllis M. Schwartz, Vice President At Large; Nick Catti, Secretary-Treasurer; ASBHP: Mary Brooks, President; Tara Velez, First Vice President; Virginia Murphy, Second Vice President; Kristin Carney, Recording Secretary; Editor Dennis D’Abreu; Office Manager, Lisa Mercogliano