Dear Colleagues,

Under the New York State Constitution (Article 19, §2), every twenty years the people of New York State may be asked to vote on a question that will appear on the top of the ballot: “Shall there be a convention to revise the constitution and amend the same?” If passed, on November 7, 2017, these simple twelve words will have a huge impact not only on our members, but also on every resident of the state.

If the voters approve a constitutional convention, the outcome could be catastrophic for you – the union member and public educator. Many of the fundamental rights that our predecessors worked to achieve: free public education, the right to collective bargain, prohibition of the reduction of public pension benefits could be taken away by the same elected officials who relentlessly attack our profession.

This important document performs three vital roles that are important to us, our families and the school community we serve. First, the constitution establishes a basic organizational structure for state government. If changes are made that give too much power to one branch, for example the executive, then our system of self-governance will be upended.

Second, the constitution establishes the fundamental rights we enjoy as citizens of New York State and as public employees. Including:

- The right to a free public education (Article 11, §1);
- Prohibiting reductions in public pension benefits (Article 5, §7);
- Rights to worker compensation (Article 1, §18);
- Rights to be a member of a union and bargain collectively (Article 1, §17), and
- Requirements that the state provide for social welfare needs (Article 27, §1).

Third, the constitution sets the most important policy goals for the people of New York State, and thus, has an impact on every other law currently in place and on future statutes yet to come.

For example, the 1967 convention was specially convened by an act of the Legislature a decade after the 20 year scheduled referendum was voted down in 1957. Following the 1967 convention, voters rejected the proposed changes which included proposed repeal to the “Blaine Amendment,” which prohibits the use of state monies to be used to assist religious schools.

Had this proposal not been rejected by the voters, public education would look very different in New York (NYSUT).

Since the American Revolution, 236 state constitutional conventions have been held throughout the country. The mandatory convention question was entered in the New York State constitution in 1846. New York has used this process nine times (1777, 1801, 1821, 1846, 1867, 1894, 1915, 1938 and 1967) to undertake major re-writes of the document. It was Thomas Jefferson, author of the U. S. Declaration of Independence, who argued that America’s state constitutions should be living documents, and ought to be revisited every twenty years. Others maintain that the current constitution is lengthy, confusing, and unreadable, with 225 amendments and obsolete provisions for today’s needs.

Continued next page
President’s Address Continued

The state constitution can be amended in two ways. First, is through the passage of individual bills by two separately elected state Legislatures (Article 19, §1). These Bills propose specific amendment questions which then appear on the November ballot. Most recently this process was undertaken in 2013. Several constitutional amendments ranging from the expansion of casino gaming in New York State to the sale of specific tracks of land within the constitutionally protected Adirondack Park were voted on by the people. All but one was passed and became part of the state constitution. This process has been used 200 times since the last major constitutional revision in 1894.

The second process for amending the New York State Constitution involves holding a constitutional convention (Article 19, §2). This legal process allows for much wider modifications of the constitution than the single amendment; including a full rewrite of the document. If the voters approve, a multi-year process begins. In 2018, three delegate’s per-State Senate District and fifteen at-large delegates are elected at the next scheduled general election-204 delegates in total. These delegates can include sitting members of the State Legislature, political party leaders or other office holders. The delegates are allowed to hold both their elected office and a position as a delegate; collecting both salaries.

The convention delegates convene in Albany on the first Tuesday of April following their election and continue in session until their work is complete. They deliberate and then publish the suggested amendments. The proposed changes are then submitted to the voters, either individually or as a group, with another public referendum vote no sooner than six weeks after the adjournment of the convention. If approved at the polls, constitutional changes go into effect the first day in January, the year after the vote is held (NYSUT).

The constitutional convention of 1967 cost the taxpayers ten million dollars. In 2017, the cost to the taxpayers could reach ten times that amount. Voters rejected the last required call for a constitutional convention in 1997. Rejection was not by accident, many groups such as advocates for public education, environmentalists, public and private organized labor etc. worked together to convince voters that holding a convention was not in the best interest of the citizens of the state.

More than ever before, we need to protect and preserve our constitutional rights in this state.

Do we trust today’s elected officials to rewrite our state constitution that has served us well for so many years? Do we want politicians, misconceptions, uninformed and misled voters to threaten the fundamental rights documented in the state constitution?

It is crucial that the WCT and the WCRT need to stay involved and cognizant of the issues and the threats to our livelihood. If we don’t protect it who will? We have to remain active in the political process. When we go to the polls on November 7, 2017, we must vote NO to the question: “Shall there be a convention to revise the constitution and amend the same?” as we are well aware of the disastrous ramifications of such a process.

In Solidarity,

Pasquale Delli Carpini
December 1<sup>st</sup> 2015 marked my 5<sup>th</sup> year as an administrator in the Wappingers Central School District. I am proud of how far our technology resources have advanced since I first began working here. Each year seems to bring new challenges and new opportunities, and the kick off for the 2015-16 school year was certainly no exception.

This summer was probably the most challenging I have seen in terms of what we needed to accomplish. I understand that the school year did not start off very well for many of our classroom professionals and I wanted to take a moment to both apologize for all of the inconveniences you endured as well as explain what we were trying to do.

Over the summer the district took on the task of eliminating our aging Novell infrastructure. The Novell environment was replaced with Microsoft Windows Servers and Active Directory. This is the benchmark solution for most organizations and corporations around the country.

Why eliminate Novell? It kept getting in our way...as an example, last year when we began printing to our copiers via employee badges we would get prompted for an additional login. Eliminating Novell resolved this issue, now we no longer get the extra prompt. Novell also impeded our ability to create our Google apps accounts, this was a major pain to deal with...requiring the technology department to jump through extra hoops to accomplish this task. These are just two small examples, but the list is greater.

The summer of 2015 was the busiest I have ever seen, and it proved too overwhelming for us to accomplish our goals. Transitioning to Active Directory is one of the most challenging IT projects for any organization to take on as it required us to touch every workstation in the district (we have over 3000 workstations district wide) and update them to this new environment. Once we started the project there was no going back, nor was it possible for us to implement this change in pieces due to the complexity of our organization. The time constraints and limited man power impacted our ability to complete this work prior to the start of school.

Looking towards the future I would like to offer some positive news. In addition to completing our security projects, the district will begin spending the $5.2 million dollars which were awarded under the Smart School Bond Act (SSBA). As part of SSBA we will finally be able to provide all of our classrooms with equitable access to interactive technology in the front of the room.

We have roughly 140 classrooms in our district, which do not have any interactive whiteboards or other display technology. I also realize that a large number of our classrooms have technology but that it is in need of repair. At the December 14, 2015 board meeting I will be presenting an SSBA implementation plan that will serve to address this deficiency.

I look forward to continuing our work in collaboration with all of you. If there are any matters you wish to discuss, or technologies you wish to explore please do not hesitate to contact myself or the technology support team.

ST (Stronger Together) Caucus Forum met November 17th at John Jay High School.

The STCaucus mission statement emphasizes the STCaucus' purpose and vision for a stronger and more democratic NYSUT which gives equal voice to every member of action policy in NYS and its effects on NY's students.

Careful review of NYSUT as a statewide union shows that only 30% of NY's locals send delegates to the NYSUT annual statewide convention where NYSUT policy, procedure and elections take place. That shocking statistic supports the fact that most members of NYSUT's rank and file are not being represented in the decision making process that governs their day to day work lives.

The STCaucus offers a voice that can drive debate and offer the perspective of every local including those in rural, suburban and urban locations around the state. One of the major reasons only 30% of locals send delegates, to the NYSUT RA is simply because locals do not believe their voice will be heard or make a difference. STCaucus offers those locals an opportunity to have a larger voice by joining with like minded locals to stand parallel with our brothers and sisters in the large locals.

The STCaucus knows that a strong Union is the best protection for public education, teachers and children. Engaging and activating each member of the rank and file is the only way that NYSUT can be a force that represents the interests of public education, teachers and children. The Supreme Court's decision regarding the Friedrich case will require every member's efforts to secure collective bargaining rights for all and the only way to get every member activated is to first make each member believe that their voice matters.

The NYSUT Representative Assembly in April 2015 was the inaugural meeting of the STCaucus. 500 delegates joined the STCaucus and together we were able to drive the conversation at the RA regarding APPR and high stakes testing. In fact, the STCaucus secured the overwhelming passage of resolutions that are now officially NYSUT’s position on the following issues:

The IREFUSE Movement - At the 2015 NYSUT RA, the IREFUSE resolution was passed unanimously. The STCaucus fully supports the resolution’s call for all teachers to refuse to allow their children to take the NYS Assessments.

College and Career Readiness Benchmarks - NYSUT, by a resolution passed at its 2015 RA, stands opposed to the current College and Career Readiness Benchmarks and grade 3-8 ELA, Math and Science Assessments being used by NYSED because they are developmentally inappropriate.

The desire of the STCaucus is that working together each member can and will make a difference that will support public education, teachers and students.
Dear Members,
The Stronger Together Caucus (ST Caucus) is a group of educators from the state who have shared concerns with the direction of education policy in NYS and how it ultimately affects our students. The caucus exists to enhance the democratic operation and process within NYSUT in order to provide an equal voice to the rank and file membership. The ST Caucus provides an alternate voice within NYSUT on topics such as Common Core, NYS testing, the reauthorization of ESEA, College and Career Readiness Benchmarks, as well as many other relevant educational issues.
Please join fellow WCT members and other educators from the state on January 9th for a day of organizing and engagement about the issues that matter most to public school teachers. We will listen to an impressive panel of educator activists and then have the opportunity to participate in workshops about how to "restore power to the teacher" through a rank and file member driven movement.
When: Saturday, January 9, 2016
Where: JFK Middle School 200 Jayne Blvd, Port Jefferson Station
Time: 9:00 am to 2:30 pm (Registration begins at 8:45 AM)
If enough members participate, we can charter a bus. You would need to be at the union office by 5:45 am for a 6:00 am departure. It is a 2.5 hr ride and we need to be there by 8:30 am to give us time to register. If you will be attending and would like to take the bus, please call Ronnie at the WCT Office (227-5065) by Tuesday, December 22nd.
In Solidarity,
The WCT Executive Board

Robert Seipp
NEA Retirement Specialist for the WCSD, Investment Advisor Representative, GWN Securities, Inc. Cell Phone: 914-204-9062 Email: rseipp@gwnsecurities.com To learn more about me and my story, click here: https://vimeo.com/123792899
Security and Advisory Services offered through GWN Securities, Inc.,
A Registered Investment Advisor. Member FINRA/SIPC 11440 N. Jog Road, Palm Beach Gardens, FL 33418 (561) 472-2700
This year Halloween took on a new meaning for me. On an early, cold Halloween morning, three John Jay teachers, Carol Tarby, Beth Rizzi, Alyson Dodge and I showed up to Hammonesset State Park in CT to run a half marathon to raise funds for the Friends of Jaclyn Foundation. The person who started the foundation is a John Jay Teacher. Her daughter had a brain tumor as a child and she started the foundation after her recovery. The funds we raised go towards the quality of life for children with brain tumors. We raised over $1600 from friends, fellow teachers, TAs, and the Interact club at John Jay. We enjoyed every step of the 13.1 mile run because we knew we were running for a good cause.

Left to Right: Roger, Carol Tarby, Alyson Dodge, Elizabeth Rizzi
Dear Colleagues,

Wishing you and your families the very best during this Holiday Season! May the New Year be filled with good health, happiness, peace and prosperity!

In Solidarity,
Pasquale

NEW ARRIVALS

OAK GROVE ELEMENTARY:

Kristen Duffy and her husband Darren welcomed a little boy into the world. Raymond Duffy was born on September 28, 2015, weighing 7lbs. 10 oz. and measuring 20 inches. Congratulations!

JOHN JAY:

The Math Department is happy to announce the arrival of Lisa and Chris Barrie’s baby. Cali Madison Barrie was born on Saturday, October 17th at 12:53 pm weighing in at 6lbs 6oz and is 18.5 inches long. Both Lisa and the baby are doing well!
This year’s 14th annual Fishkill Plains’ Healthy Steps Program ran from October 5th to October 18th. The program was tremendously successful. As a school, Fishkill Plains’ students, parents, faculty and staff walked over 18,000 miles for this two week community walking program.

The Healthy Steps program is designed as a health initiative to inspire students and their families to walk every day in school and out of school. It provides the opportunity to not only have a healthy lifestyle program, but also a good natured competition between the classes in each grade level.

What started as a simple healthy lifestyle program has now evolved into a family and community event. With the help of the Dutchess County Rail Trail, Fishkill Plains now holds an annual walking event for the entire Fishkill Plains community. This year hundreds of students and parents showed up to walk two miles together in solidarity to support the Fishkill Plains’ Healthy Steps program. I would like to thank all who participated in Healthy Steps. I truly look forward to doing it all again next year.

Students at Kinry Road School have been participating in a reading incentive program known as Read to Feed. This program is designed by Heifer International, a nonprofit organization dedicated to ending world hunger and poverty while caring for the Earth. Students are participating by reading a specific amount of time to earn prizes and by collecting donations. Heifer International uses the donations to provide livestock to struggling families who have few resources and need an ongoing source of income. This helps families to lift themselves to self-reliance.

Approximately 70 students have submitted reading logs and 23 reached the 1,000 minute mark by the November deadline to earn a plush animal bookmark. Students who log in 1,500 minutes of reading by the December deadline will be invited to a movie party. The Kinry family has met their goal of raising $500 so that a Heifer will be provided to a family in need.

Congratulations to the students at Kinry who have learned that they can make a difference in the world.
Oak Grove Elementary School won the 10-Day walking challenge! The goal was to motivate students to increase their level of physical activity outside of physical education class. Physical Education teachers, Dawn Turpin-Orgetas and Anne Seymour coordinated a plan to challenge students, staff, members, and their families to compete in a contest to see which school could do the most walking over the ten day period from October 6th - 15th. The total after ten days was Oak Grove walked 8,234 miles compared to Kinry’s 7,942 miles.

The championship trophy is on display at Oak Grove Elementary School this year.

Thank you to everyone who participated in this fun event. Oak Grove had 149 walking logs returned. Kinry Road Elementary had 122 walking logs returned. Those forms contributed an average of 55 miles per day to the each school’s total. Shoelace tokens were distributed during P.E. classes to all students who turned in a family walking log forms.

What the Healthy Steps Program did for our schools:
1. Brought the school community together to achieve a common health goal.
2. Increased students’ math skills as they added up their daily miles.
3. Allowed opportunity for classroom teachers to incorporate geography via the virtual hike, as students track their school’s progress across North America. Oak Grove made it to Utah and Kinry Road stopped in Washington on the virtual hike.
4. Increased energy levels of students and staff.
5. Increased school spirit and teamwork.

On November 19th, The Oak Grove Peer Mediation Club will hold their 9th annual Little Doctors Blood Drive Event. The group of 4th, 5th, & 6th grade students along with their club leader Mrs. Turpin-O, will volunteer to provide a community service by hosting this yearly event. One of the goals of the Oak Grove Peer Mediation Club is to reach out into the community and to help those in need.

They decided to host a blood drive in order to help alleviate the blood shortage in our area. They learned that about 350 pints of blood are needed everyday and that only 2% of the population donates. The club members will greet donors at the door, escort donors to registration, help at the canteen, and babysit. This year we would like to donate over 60 pints of blood. The club would like to thank all of the teachers, staff, and community members that have helped make each blood drive a success and look forward to seeing you again on November 19th.

Thank you for your support of the New York Blood Center.
On Thursday, October 8th members of Protection Engine Company visited Fishkill Elementary School to teach the students about fire safety. The day started with an assembly, as well as classroom visits, to demonstrate and discuss ways to safely exit the home in a fire.

The children then participated in a simulated house fire where the trailer fills with artificial smoke and the children must find their way to the exit and climb out. To see what the children learned, the fire department holds a poster contest and awards a prize to one child per grade level for the best poster.

Special thanks goes to the following firefighters for making it a great day: Brandon Knapp (Chief), Steve Vilardi (Assistant Chief), Danny Burke (Captain), Brian Canero (Lieutenant), Rich Wolfe, Peter Szczuka, Glenn Scofield, John Testerman and Brandon DeMarco.
UNION Happy Hour at Double O

On Tuesday, November 3rd, following Superintendent’s Conference Day, WCT members gathered at Double Os for a social hour. The event was sponsored by WCT’s LAP (Local Action Project) Committee as part of Pillar I: Member Engagement. At any one time, approximately 150 members enjoyed each other’s company and caught up on each other’s lives. Leslee Stolarski (JJ) was the lucky winner of the raffle winning a gift certificate to Double Os.
A PUBLICATION OF THE WAPPINGERS CONGRESS OF TEACHERS

280 New Hackensack Rd
Wappingers Falls, NY  12590
E-MAIL: wct@frontiernet.net

SUBMIT ADVERTISEMENTS

BOTH NONCOMMERCIAL, MEMBER ADS (NO CHARGE/TWO ISSUES) & COMMERIAL ADS ($5/ISSUE), THROUGH WCT OFFICE: commentator@wcteachers.org.
Checks payable & mailed to WCT

Commentator Editor: Shahna Allen     Webmaster: Nancy Beiner
The Value of NYSUT Membership

You may not be aware that your NYSUT membership allows you to enjoy the benefits of the more than 40 programs & services endorsed by NYSUT Member Benefits, including a variety of quality, competitive insurance plans.

Member Benefits strives to provide the highest-quality programs for NYSUT members and closely scrutinizes all proposals from reputable vendors before any endorsements are given.

While we work continuously to maintain quality benefit programs at competitive prices, you are encouraged to shop and compare before making any purchasing decisions.

Are you ready to answer these questions?

What would happen if you suddenly died? Have you ever considered what would happen to your spouse and/or children? Take a few moments and answer these questions now:

1) Would your loved ones be able to afford their current home?

2) Could your loved ones continue to pay regular bills and maintain their medical coverage?

3) Would your loved ones be able to plan for your final funeral expenses?

If your answer to the above questions is “No” or “I don’t know,” consider enrolling in the NYSUT Member Benefits Trust-endorsed Term Life or Level Term Life Insurance Plans. Both of these plans allow you to select the plan and benefit amount that best meets your specific needs.

Visit the NYSUT Member Benefits website at memberbenefits.nysut.org or call 800-626-8101 for specific details about these plans.

The Issuance of a Certificate of Insurance or payment of benefits will depend upon the answers given in the application and the truthfulness of those answers. Additional underwriting requirements may be needed.

Member Benefits has an endorsement arrangement with its endorsed insurance provider of 7.61% of earned premiums for these programs. All such payments to Member Benefits are used solely to defray the costs of administering its various programs and, where appropriate, to enhance them. The Insurer pools the premiums of Member Benefits participants who are insured for the purposes of determining premium rates and accounting. Coverage outside of these plans may have rates and terms that are not the same as those obtainable through Member Benefits. The Insurer or Member Benefits may hold premium reserves that may be used to offset rate increases and/or fund such other expenses related to the plan as determined appropriate by Member Benefits. Member Benefits acts as your advocate; please contact Member Benefits at 800-626-8101 if you experience a problem with any endorsed program.

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.
Please see the dates below for the 2016 Legal and Financial Days. If you would like to schedule an appointment, please call the union office at 227-5065.

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<th>WCT Welfare Trust Fund - Legal and Financial Day Schedule 2016</th>
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**LOCATION OF WCT OFFICE**

280 NEW HACKENSACK RD
WAPPINGERS FALLS, NY 12590

- Located directly across from Dutchess County Airport
- On the right 2.5 miles from Rt 9
- On the left 0.25 miles from All Angels and 376 Intersection

**THE WCT WELFARE TRUST FUND**

Trustees:

- **Flip Gertler** Chairperson
- **Theresa Stowel** Treasurer
- **Erin Mulligan** Secretary
- **Kim Mahusky** Trustee
- **Pasquale Delli Carpini** Trustee
- **Ronnie Dwyer** WTF Administrator

**IMPORTANT PHONE NUMBERS:**

- **WCT OFFICE:** 845-227-5065
- **DANIEL H. COOK:** 800-342-6651
- **MIRKIN & GORDON (LAWYERS):** 914-997-1576
- **DAVIS VISION:** 800-999-5431
- **STACY BRAUN ASSOC (FINANCIAL):** 888-949-1925
- **HEALTH ADVOCATE:** 866-695-8622