

OCTOBER 2017

LOCAL DO'S



Under the New York State Constitution (Article 19, §2), the people of the Empire State are asked every 20 years a seemingly simple ballot question: “Shall there be a convention to revise the constitution and amend same?” This question will appear on the top of the ballot on Nov. 7, 2017, and poses a grave threat to NYSUT members and every citizen of the state. We have a lot to lose.



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CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION VOTE NOVEMBER 7, 2017

“TURN TO THE BACK. STOP THE ATTACK!”

BY MARK STEINBERG,
BMUST PRESIDENT

The good news...A year ago polls indicated 75% of New Yorkers favored having a Constitutional Convention. Today that number is under 50%.

The bad news...Even with \$500,000 from the AFT and NEA, and even with NYSUT working with other unions that have similar interests, we fully expect to see before Election Day a slew of ads from our well-funded opponents (who know all too well what the public resents) advocating for a “YES” vote.

The \$10 million NYSUT collected statewide for VOTE COPE is a pittance compared to our opponents’ resources. The Citizens United case allows corporate special interests to spend unlimited money getting their cronies elected and pushing for a “YES” vote. They can absolutely outspend us. We don’t win in the media. We win by mobilizing and GETTING OUT THE “NO” VOTE! That is our strength!

Here are some excerpts from an article from former Suffolk County Executive Steve Levy. If his beliefs don’t encourage a “NO” vote, we should all be very concerned come November 7:

Steve Levy: Constitutional Convention can bring about long-overdue reforms to Albany.

There are pros & cons to this issue. If entrenched special interests and the elected political power structure were to gain control of the convention, they could make some of our archaic laws even worse.

But, despite the possibility, the merits are still tilted somewhat toward having the convention.

Below are just some of the topics that could be pushed:

- *Ban contributions from companies and unions doing business with the state*
- *Enact pension reform*
- *Cap mandatory arbitration, which has awarded some police salaries exceeding \$200,000*
- *Eliminate overtime in pension calculations*
- *End the Triborough Amendment, which provides automatic step salary increases, even after the contract expires*

If our elected representatives won’t enact the reforms we so desperately need, perhaps it’s time for the citizens of this state to bypass this legislature and control their own destiny through a Constitutional Convention. The good news is that the convention allows delegates to be elected by the public in November 2018 in each senatorial district throughout the State. Now is the time for residents to start thinking about whether they’d want to participate in this process and what they’d like to see added to this list.

What Levy fails to mention are the impossible odds against regular (non-political) citizens from being elected delegates to the convention. At the last Constitutional Convention in 1967, more than 80% of the delegates were career politicians and Albany insiders. They were there getting double pay for their regular job and for their delegate position. Even if a convention is one day they get paid, AND it’s



Mark Steinberg,
President, BMUST

pensionable for them! They have the funding and political machinery to get themselves elected. Few others have that luxury.

Also, once elected, does anyone expect the regular Albany crowd to propose the amendments people like Levy hope to see come from a Constitutional Convention? These politicians, in their regular capacity as legislators, can amend the constitution to bring about the ethics reform we hear about each time a Senator or Representative gets taken away in handcuffs. They have the ability to do it but haven't because they don't want to do it!

Perhaps in challenging fiscal times Mr. Levy would like to see pensions taxed in New York, a practice that our constitution prohibits. Evidently he wants to skew negotiations in favor of management by ending the Triborough Amendment. I assume he's not concerned about opening the door to weakening unions by restricting our right to unionize and collectively bargain. Maybe he's oblivious how other states have made drastic changes to their

pension systems with disastrous results for active members and retirees.

Brothers and sisters... for quite some time we have tried to increase awareness about the vote on November 7. With magnets, posters, articles, and phone banks I hope BMUST members (and their families and friends) have become cognizant of this critical vote. It will all mean nothing if you don't vote on Election Day. Please remember to vote and remember to turn to the back of the ballot to stop the attack on all of us.

In solidarity,

Mark



DEDICATED TEACHERS ASSUME MORE RESPONSIBILITIES

BY STACY PEKUSIC (GRAND AVE M.S.) LOCAL DOS WRITER

Grand Avenue started the new school year with two familiar faces in new positions: Howie Fields and Ben Fisher. When Social Studies teacher, Dean of Students, and Athletic Coordinator, Don Fleming, retired last June, his departure left several openings. I took a few minutes to sit down to speak with them in their respective new roles as Dean of Students and Athletic Coordinator.



A welcome presence in the halls of Grand Avenue for eighteen years, Howie Fields was a natural choice to fill Don Fleming's shoes as Dean of Students. Howie shadowed Don last year, learning the ropes before officially filling the

position this September. The best part of the job, he says, is the ability to really spend time talking to kids and having a chance to help struggling students. A change this year is the implementation of SafeSchoolsNY, a computerized, more efficient management system for discipline. This allows Mr. Fields to be a visible presence in the hallways every period, and especially so during the three lunch periods. Howie is glad to have this opportunity, but now that he is teaching only two periods, he does miss the one-on-one relationships he formed when teaching a full course load. Now he focuses on making connections with kids through coaching. Grand students should be thankful to have Howie on their side!

As someone who loves athletics, Ben Fisher, a World Languages teacher, decided to apply for the job as Athletic Coordinator. In his opinion, it is the next best thing to playing. In his new position, he is able to get a taste of every sport, helping kids to reach their truest potential, learn self-respect, and build character. The best part about this job, Ben says, is the kids. He believes it is the perfect platform for creating enthusiasm and getting involved.

And that includes making some changes. He has been able to use the morning announcements to showcase highlights of GAMS sports, ESPN-style, and the kids are really enjoying this new



energy. Also, the pep rallies this year were "u-streamed"-- allowing parents to watch live-- and held out on the turf field instead of in the gym. Students and faculty ran onto the field through a tunnel of pom-poms, an effort to make the experience more inclusive and to amp up spirit among all students. So far, Ben is doing a great job!

We look forward to more exciting changes as Ben and Howie grow into their new roles. So far, the atmosphere at Grand has been very positive and a lot of fun.

CONGRATULATIONS TO
BARBARA HIRTEN,
GRAND AVE M.S.

on her selection as the
2017 New York State Art Educator of the Year
from Region Nine.

CALHOUN: CHARITY IN ACTION

BY WENDY SIMSON

(CALHOUN H.S.) LOCAL DOS WRITER

On Monday, September 11, Calhoun and all the schools in the district participated in a **National Day of Service and Remembrance**. Students and staff were encouraged to wear jeans and red, white, and blue and to donate money to support the Hurricane Harvey relief efforts. Calhoun raised over \$1,000 towards Houston's devastation. Calhoun also collected donations to help damaged areas in Puerto Rico.

The Calhoun Football Team will be selling pink bandanas for **Breast Cancer Awareness Month**. They are \$5 and the proceeds will go to the **Susan G. Komen Foundation**. You can buy them at the football games.

On Saturday, Oct. 21 Calhoun will be hosting the MacArthur, Mepham, Kennedy, and Calhoun baseball teams in an effort to raise money for the Kuzemchak family. **Stevie "Bones" Kuzemchak** was thrown a curveball and is currently battling Hodgkins Lymphoma. As you can imagine, the



medical bills are mounting. Calhoun will have a home run derby starting at 11:00 AM with the team competition. At 1:00 PM, the Derby will open up to anyone who wants to participate. There will be raffles and other opportunities to donate.

Thanks in advance for being a part of this great day to support Stevie and his family.

MY PERSPECTIVE ON THE CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION

BY MICHAEL DOLBER, FORMER BMUST PRESIDENT

It doesn't

seem possible to me that I have been retired for four years. Time has a funny way of sneaking up on you. That is one reason I asked Mark if I could share a few thoughts with you.

It was my intention to stay connected and involved with the union, but, as some of you know, my wife's illness has prevented me from doing that as I had planned. As John Lennon said, "life is what happens to you while you are busy making other plans."

Lately, I have really been feeling the need to reconnect, and I hope no one objects to my using this as a means to do it. My ties to BMUST, and to many of you, are too important to me to allow them to lapse. I hope the school year has gotten off to a good start, that life is treating you well, and that you are coping the best you can with these very difficult times in our nation.

I also want to say something about the upcoming vote on the Constitutional Convention. I cannot add anything to what Mark has written in this issue, and to what I am sure you have heard over the past months, but I can add a personal perspective. As you know, there are many reasons to vote NO, but I just want to focus on one – your pension.

When I was in my twenties and thirties, there was no better way to make my eyes glaze over and have me start looking for the door than to lecture me about pensions and annuities. I was worried about getting excessed from my job, and I didn't want to think

much about retirement. It seemed like a hundred years off. But I was foolish and short sighted. From my experience over the past four years, I cannot overstate what it means to have the security of knowing that that money will be in my account every month, no matter what. Many workers do not have that security, and some people resent the fact that we have it. But we deserve it, and so do they. Please don't ever let anyone tell you that you don't deserve that pension, or that it is excessive, or that we cannot afford it. You've earned it. It is legally yours. Do whatever you can to protect it. I am pretty sure that nearly all of you who go to vote will vote no. But we have to vote on November 7. And we have to explain to

friends and family who are not teachers, or police officers, or other public employees, why their 'no vote' is essential. I am not asking you to do this for the retirees. I am asking you to do it for yourselves. We know that there are forces and groups within the state who would like

"We know that there are forces and groups within the state who would like nothing better than to destroy the pension protection we have. We cannot take the risk that they may succeed."

nothing better than to destroy the pension protection we have. We cannot take the risk that they may succeed.

Thanks to all of you who read this. Thanks to Mark and the Local Dos staff for giving me the opportunity to write it.

Wishing all of you good health and peace,

Mike Dolber

VOTE NO on the CON CON

VOTE NO ON PROP 1

✓ Prop 1 is on the back of the ballot. **Turn to the back. Stop the attack.**

A con con is **Pandora's Box**. Here are some things at stake:

**VOTE
NO!**

Turn to the Back.
Stop the Attack.

Stop Greed, Corruption & Insider Politics

- **At least \$350 MILLION** in taxpayer dollars will be lavished on a Constitutional Convention.
- Delegates will pocket **\$80,000** each.
- Delegates who hold NYS office will get their **full salary AND their convention paychecks** at the same time. That's **double dipping** for hundreds of politicians.
- Delegates get paid every year for unlimited years. Plus, they can hire family members and cronies for their staffs and pay them, too.
- Delegates don't have to accomplish anything to be paid. It's a **bonndoggle**.
- At the last convention in 1967, **4 of 6** delegates were Albany insiders.
- No serious person can expect a convention of Albany insiders to take on Albany's culture of corruption. **They never have.**

**VOTE
NO!**

Turn to the Back.
Stop the Attack.

Stop Waste & Inefficiency

- The NYS Constitution can be changed at any time through **amendments**. There is no need for a long, costly, inefficient convention.
- The Constitution has been **amended 200+ times** since 1894.
- After the last Con Con in 1967, voters **rejected EVERY SINGLE CHANGE** that the delegates proposed. After spending tens of millions of dollars, the convention accomplished nothing.

**VOTE
NO!**

Turn to the Back.
Stop the Attack.

Protect Cops, Firefighters & First Responders

- Article 5 protects cops, firefighters, nurses & first responders by guaranteeing the retirement safety they've earned on our streets
- PBA (Police Benevolent Association): the statewide **police** organization rejects con con
- NYSFFA (NYS Professional Firefighters Association): the statewide **firefighters** organization rejects con con
- NYSNA (NYS Nurses Association): the statewide **nurses** organization rejects con con
- UEMSO (Uniformed EMS Officers): the statewide **EMS** organization rejects con con

**VOTE
NO!**

Turn to the Back.
Stop the Attack.

Preserve Wildlife, Trees, Parks and Open Space

- Article 14 promises that places like the Catskills and Adirondacks "shall be forever kept as wild forest lands"
- Con con would expose lands to **clear-cut logging, fracking and development**
- Sierra Club, Food and Water Watch, Adirondack Council, Friends of the Forest, Protect the Adirondacks, Environmental Advocates of NY, ADK Mountain Club-- these are just some of the **environmental groups that oppose the con con**

**VOTE
NO!**

Turn to the Back.
Stop the Attack.

Defend Kids, Public Schools and Teachers

- Article 11 guarantees **all children the right to a free public education**
- Advocates of **vouchers, religious schools, privatization and charter schools** want a con con so they can diminish our constitutional right to public schools
- One of the changes adopted at the last convention in 1987 allowed public monies to be used to pay for religious schools. If voters hadn't rejected it, **our entire public education system would have changed drastically.**
- Article 5 protects **teachers'** safe retirement after decades of service to children.

**VOTE
NO!**

Turn to the Back.
Stop the Attack.

Shield The Vulnerable

- Article 17 protects the **vulnerable** by guaranteeing the "aid, care and support of the needy"
- Mental health, public health, SNAP, veterans' services, HEAP & elder care are just some of the programs operated under the umbrella of article 17

**VOTE
NO!**

Turn to the Back.
Stop the Attack.

Stand for Working People

- Article 1 promises that **labor**--like electricians, steelworkers & plumbers-- can form unions
- Right-to-work predators want to use the con con to turn NY into an **anti-worker** state like Wisconsin or Alabama
- Article 1 guarantees **workers comp** for people injured on the job
- AFL-CIO, CSEA, NSYUT, IBEW and **unions** across the state oppose con con.

**VOTE
NO!**

Turn to the Back.
Stop the Attack.

Sustain Political Diversity

In addition to all the organizations noted above, here are just a few more of the **100+ coalition partners that have formed New Yorkers Against Corruption** to oppose the con con:

- **LEFT:** Working Families Party | Equality NY | Harmed Parenthood | NAACP | LGBT Network | Se hace camino Nueva York (Make the Road NY) | L. Progressive Coalition.
- **RIGHT:** Conservative Party | Council of Churches | NYS Rifle & Pistol Association | NYS Right to Life | NYS Republican Party

**VOTE
NO!**

Turn to the Back.
Stop the Attack.

Turn to the Back. Stop the Attack.

- Prop 1: "Shall there be a convention to revise the Constitution and amend the same?"
- Prop 1 is on the **BACK** of the ballot! **Turn the ballot over and vote NO!**



BMUST MEMBERS AT THE MAKING STRIDES AGAINST BREAST CANCER WALK,
JONES BEACH, OCTOBER 15, 2017



A NEW MISSION AT MEMPHAM

**BY BILL MORRIS (MEPHAM H.S.),
LOCAL DO'S STAFF WRITER**

National Board Certification Cohort Begins in BMCHSD at Mepham H.S.

Bellmore-Merrick's inaugural National Board Certification Cohort began on September 14th. According to the NBCT mission, the goals of the certification process are helping teachers to get their students to learn more, encouraging reflection to improve teaching practices, and assisting teachers to demonstrate a commitment to excellence.

The BMCHSD group is led by Candidate Support Provider (CSP) Jennifer Frasca, from Oceanside, NY. Nine BMUST members have joined the group and have begun meeting monthly in the Mepham High School Library. Our newest contract allows for a \$2,000 annual stipend for teachers who become nationally board certified, as listed on page 61 of our green contract book.

NYSUT offers a scholarship for National Board Certification entitled The Albert Shanker Grant, named for the former president of the AFT. You can find more information about the grant at:

<http://www.highered.nysed.gov/kiap/ashanker/albertshanker.html>.

You can also learn more about National Board Certification at: <http://www.nbpts.org/>.



SAFE HALLOWEEN

**BY BRUCE REED (KENNEDY H.S.),
LOCAL DO'S STAFF EDITOR**

JFK's Student Government sponsored **Safe Halloween** inside Kennedy's school building on October 25. Young children from around the community were invited to attend this popular event. Those who attended experienced the transformation of Kennedy into a haunted house of rooms, featuring a wide variety of frightful themes to entice the visitors.

Under the auspices of Jon Dell'Olio, the Student Government members collaborated with various extra curricula clubs to plan and execute the fun-filled evening. Each club was charged with the task of developing a Halloween themed room, and then to decorate their respective rooms accordingly.

In addition, the club members facilitated a wide variety of fun experiences for the young 'trick-or-treaters' including face painting, coloring books, Halloween-themed masks, and faux tattoos. The highlight of the evening was the availability of candy, cake pops, and other treats which were offered to the children in great abundance. Over 250 children arrived in full Halloween costumes, capturing the hearts of both students and faculty alike.

MAMS "RAMILY" OFF TO A STRONG START

BY LISA SHAPIRO (MERRICK AVE M.S.) LOCAL DOS WRITER

Merrick Avenue kicked off the start of the 2017-2018 school year with a visit from our mascot, the Ram. The faculty greeted students outside as they arrived for their first day of 7th and 8th grade wearing MAMS gear. Nothing makes this staff happier than being able to wear a t-shirt to work, let alone on the first day of school!

We immediately jumped right in with a school-wide fundraiser for Hurricane Harvey relief. Between the staff and students, over

\$800 was raised and combined with the monies collected from the other buildings in the district. While the devastation in Texas is terrible, starting the year off showing our new seventh graders the importance of helping others during their time of need was a valuable lesson and a teachable moment, which is a huge part of the culture here at Merrick Avenue Middle School.



After a summer of construction, our building was essentially ready to go. The custodial staff did a great job preparing the building for full use. Our science labs are beautiful; it was like HGTV swooped in and completed a remodeling of our labs!

We have welcomed a number of new teachers to our "Ramily," mainly in the Foreign Language, Special Education, Home and Careers, Science and Social Studies

departments. We hope they feel comfortable and at home here. They have already proven to be great, new additions.

Finally, **congratulations to Mike Dlugozima**, who has been awarded the **NYSEC Educators of Excellence Award**. He will be honored at this year's New York State English Conference in Albany, New York on October 26th and 27th.

CONGRATULATIONS TO
MIKE DLUGOZIMA (MAMS) &
ERICA WAGNER-O'ROURKE (MEPHAM H.S.)

2017 New York State English Council's
EDUCATORS OF EXCELLENCE WINNERS

You're invited to our Annual BMUST Holiday Party!

Friday,
December 1, 2017
2:30 - 5:00 PM

Grillfire
33 Sunrise Highway
Merrick, NY 11566

FREE Appetizers, & 1 Complimentary Beverage

Admission: Bring an unwrapped toy for a child
(Ages: Infant to 18) or \$10



If you don't attend the party and would like to make a monetary donation towards our
Toys 4 Tots program, please make checks out to BMUST.
All checks should be sent to the BMUST office attention Michelle Gagnon.



Mark Steinberg, BMUST President

Bruce Reed/JFK, BMUST Public Relations

Have you had your financial check-up lately?

NYSUT Member Benefits launches the new Financial Planning Center!

NYSUT Member Benefits is excited to announce the launch of our NEW online Financial Planning Center. This enhanced site will assist NYSUT members and their families with making a variety of important financial decisions.

The NYSUT Member Benefits Financial Planning Center provides helpful tools and resources to assist members with a number of crucial decisions regarding financial wellness and retirement planning.



This new site includes more than 100 modules on different financial topics along with a financial fitness check-up to see where members stand with their financial knowledge.

Whether it's planning for retirement, saving for college for your children or considering purchasing a home, the choices we need to make on a regular basis are never easy. If you're already enjoying retirement, you may be dealing with long-term care needs, managing your investments and estate planning.

NYSUT members can get assistance with these questions and more with our NEW Financial Planning Center.

To access the Financial Planning Center (and more than 100 planning modules), visit the NYSUT Member Benefits website at ***memberbenefits.nysut.org*** and click on **"Financial Planning Center."**

To learn more about Member Benefits-endorsed programs & services, visit ***memberbenefits.nysut.org*** or call **800-626-8101**.



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.