

MARCH/APRIL 2014

LOCAL DO'S

THE FUTURE OF NYSUT

by Rob Walsh

Local Do's Staff-writer

The 42nd annual NYSUT Representative Assembly (RA) was held in New York City from Friday, April 4 - Sunday, April 6. In attendance and representing the members of BMUST were President Mark Steinberg, Treasurer Rich Wilen and myself. This was the first NYSUT RA for Rich and I. As I am sure you are well aware, it was an eventful RA during which we elected an almost entirely new slate of officers, including our



new president Karen Magee. It was a weekend of reflection on where NYSUT has been and where it should be headed. With respect to the future direction of NYSUT, it was a disruptive weekend. If you know me, you know that I could go on and on about the politics of the weekend and I would welcome the opportunity to share my experience with whomever is interested (feel free to email me at bmust1vp@gmail.com). What I really want to do in this column, however, is to take a moment to discuss the purpose and make-up of a NYSUT RA and how what happens at a Representative



continued on page 2

BMUST

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

PRESIDENT MARK STEINBERG
1ST VICE PRESIDENT - ROBERT WALSH
2ND VICE PRESIDENT - PETER BRIDESON
TREASURER - RICH WILEN
GRIEVANCE CHAIR - JON DELL'OLIO
PRES/PARAPROFESSIONALS CHRISTINE LATORRE
PRESIDENT BMRTA - SHARON WISLA

**HEAD BUILDING REPRESENTATIVES**

CALHOUN HS - DOUG SMESTAD
GRAND AVENUE - CAROLYN CONDENZIO
KENNEDY HS - BRIAN DEGAETANO
MAP - GEISHA KWIATKOWSKI
MEPHAM HS - BILL MORRIS
MERRICK AVE - AMANDA MYLES-MCANALLY

**LOCAL DO'S STAFF**

EDITOR - BRUCE REED
CALHOUN - BETH BORZONE
GRAND AVENUE - PIA SANTODONATO
KENNEDY - BRAD SEIDMAN
MAP - LAURA SHERIDAN
MEPHAM - ROB WALSH
MERRICK AVE - MIKE DLUGOZIMA

continued from page 1

Assembly can effect what we do as educators.

First, it is important to remember that NYSUT is a union of more than 600,000 active and retired New York State educators (primary, secondary and post-secondary), school-related personnel and various healthcare workers. We are reputed to be one of the largest and most powerful unions in the nation. If, like myself, you have found yourself wondering how, in the face of the destructive tax-cap, a disastrous APPR **and** the failed implementation of the flawed Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS), Richard Iannuzzi came to be the leader of NYSUT, you will find the answer within the session details of the NYSUT Representative Assembly.

As it turns out, the RA has two primary purposes. The first is to elect our five statewide officers (a President, three Vice Presidents and a Treasure/Secretary) and 76 members of the Board of Directors. The election of officers occurs every three years. This year was the first time that incumbents had faced challengers at the RA since the late 1970's and the first time the sitting president was not re-elected. (Find a complete list of all newly elected delegate members at <http://goo.gl/j7ncwq> BMUST is in ED 17). The second role of the RA is to help set policy and priorities for the union. This is done by debating the merits of, and then voting on, various resolutions that have come before the RA, resolutions that have been written and submitted by local chapters such as BMUST. Resolutions passed this session ended NYSUT's support of the CCLS, called on the Board of

REVIVE NYSUT!

* by Rob Walsh,
Mepham H.S.



Karen E. Magee

Karen E. Magee, the newly elected NYSUT President, taught elementary school and special education in Harrison for 30 years.



Andrew Pallotta

Andrew Pallotta, the newly elected NYSUT Executive Vice President, taught elementary school in the Bronx for over two decades.

Regents to remove Commissioner King, directed NYSUT to lobby against the merit pay scheme included in the recently passed state budget amongst other things.

Finally, who are the delegates of the RA and how are they selected? NYSUT is made up of 1,200 locals. Each local is permitted one delegate per 100 members. Delegates are elected by a vote of their colleagues. BMUST, with our nearly 500 members, is permitted a maximum of 5 delegates. New York City (also known as the United Federation of Teachers - the UFT) with its 80,000 members, had 800 delegates at the RA (more than 1/3 of the total number of delegates in attendance). Why did BMUST have only three delegates? Only three of us ran for election. Hopefully we can send a full slate of delegates to the next RA (don't let the fact that it will be held in Buffalo discourage you). One fact that I found interesting was that even though a record number of delegates attended the RA, more than 2,300 delegates voted on Saturday, just 43% of all the locals of NYSUT was represented. It is my hope that the new leadership, with their ground-up approach and their determined style of inclusivity, will be able to increase participation of NYSUT members not only at future RA's but also in all of the work of our NYSUT organization. Mr. Iannuzzi learned all too late that only through the support and engagement of its members will NYSUT be successful in moving our agenda forward.



There is no strength without unity



**BMUST Members Geisha Kwiatkowski,
Arthur Schnee and Beth Borzone**

BMUST members, along with several other NYSUT activists and allies in education, rally outside the offices of Sen. Jack M. Martins in Garden City, New York on Friday, March 21, 2014.

The central message was to raise objections to Gov. Cuomo's budget proposals. The N.Y.S. Senate proposals were especially vilified, as they shortchanged public schools, funded and empowered charter and private schools at the expense of public schools, and intensified the troublesome effects of the tax cap.



May 20th! It Matters!



...CHANGE
ANYTHING
IF YOU DON'T ACTUALLY CAST A VOTE!

I VOTE BECAUSE
IT'S MY RIGHT
IT'S MY RESPONSIBILITY
& IT'S MY CHILDREN'S
FUTURE

By Local Do's Staff-writer, Amanda McAnally

At the last Trustees' meeting, we were discussing ways to improve the number of BMUST members voting in the various elections. When I was asked to encourage our members on this issue, I felt it very fitting to focus on the theme of "Voter Turnout." I began to research voting slogans that would inspire me and others – slogans that capture the meaning and significance of our union electoral process. I know at times I am preaching to the choir when I remind teachers of the importance of voting, but every now and then we all could use a gentle reminder to push us in the right direction. So here it is:

Please remember to vote for your local budgets on Tuesday, May 20th.

It really does matter!

**IF YOU DON'T VOTE
YOU LOSE YOUR RIGHT
TO COMPLAIN!**

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

It certainly was an RA like none other that I have experienced before during my years as a NYSUT delegate. The RA has always been an opportunity for NYSUT members to coalesce around mutual areas of concern while developing a legislative agenda for the upcoming year. While doing that, a consensus emerged about a plan of action on the following issues: (1) Commissioner King (2) APPR (3) Common Core and (4) The State budget was not difficult to achieve. To summarize a few resolutions related to these issues: 1. Commissioner King needs to be removed immediately because there is no confidence in his policies. 2. We need to support the right of parents to opt out of standardized assessments and determine other appropriate measures of proficiency.

raise funds, and establishes a Teacher Excellence Fund (aka, a merit pay system), must be confronted locally and in Albany.

The election of the NYSUT executive board however, exposed significant divisions in our organization. There has always been a perception that the city teachers (UFT) essentially lead the way in NYSUT since they control almost one third of the delegate vote at the RA. Their endorsement of the REVIVE NY slate as opposed to the incumbent slate with Dick Iannuzzi essentially assured that on



**Mark Steinberg,
President, BMUST**

There are many individuals who oppose us. Given the opportunity, they would ... take away our rights to collectively bargain, our job protections, and our pensions.

The APPR plan requires modifications. 3. We need to halt further implementation of the Common Core Learning Standards to have an opportunity to analyze the modules and testing expectations. Tests that do not count for students should not count for teachers either. 4. A state budget that does not fully restore the Gap Elimination Adjustment (GEA), funnels more public funds to charter schools, maintains an onerous tax cap that inhibits a district's ability to

Sunday morning we would witness the start of Karen Magee's presidency of NYSUT. Regardless who won the election, the process, at times acrimonious, led many non-UFT delegates (including many in the Long Island delegation) to express their frustrations. I have seen disagreements at RA's before, but this time it felt different.



continued on page 6

continued from page 5

As all the nominees stated, we need to come together and support our organization and our profession as we move forward. Differences of opinion need to be put aside and we must work towards achieving our legislative goals. There are many individuals and groups who oppose us. Given the opportunity, they would turn New York into Wisconsin by taking away our rights to collectively bargain, our job protections, and our pensions. They are well-funded. The

recent slew of pro-charter school television commercials reportedly cost \$3.5 million to run for a month. NYSUT ran its own commercial for a week and it cost \$1.5 million. I did not even see that one, and that's a significant problem.



So what's the answer? Although unfortunately, not all of our own membership will agree, part of the answer is Vote Cope dollars. NYSUT took in \$8.8 million last year in Vote Cope to support our lobbying and legislative efforts. Forty percent of that money gets returned to locals for their individual needs. That left

NYSUT with a little over \$5 million to fight **our** fight statewide and in Albany, which does not buy much television commercial time. Governor Cuomo has amassed over \$33 million for his re-election campaign and to push his tax cap, Common Core and pro charter school agenda. When only 1 of 3 NYSUT members contribute to Vote-Cope,

“ ... It was certainly an RA like none other that I have experienced before during my years as a NYSUT delegate.”

we all need to do a lot better. As one delegate stated during the breakout session about Vote-Cope, “Don’t make me pull your weight.” We all need to participate. This is not about Democrats or Republicans. This is about teachers and our profession. I am sure the teachers in

Wisconsin never envisioned experiencing the losses they have in recent years. Their membership is down 40%. Don’t think it can’t happen here. We must be prepared financially to rally, lobby, and support pro-education legislators. The Vote-Cope money you contribute certainly will not impact your daily life. It could however have a significant impact on your job and retirement.

Something to think about.

In solidarity,

Mark

Coming Soon:
New endorsed shopping program



NYSUT Member Benefits is excited to announce the endorsement of the member shopping program powered by PayCheck Direct for roll-out this spring 2014.

NYSUT Member Benefits is excited to announce the endorsement of the member shopping program powered by PayCheck Direct for roll-out this spring 2014.

This program – part of the national retail powerhouse Bluestem Brands, Inc. family, which also includes Fingerhut and *Gettington.com* – allows individuals to purchase what they want now and pay interest-free over 12 months.

Through PayCheck Direct, NYSUT members & their families will have access to more than 7,000 name-brand products such as appliances, televisions, computers, electronics, furniture, and much more.

Members would have the option of paying for any items they purchase interest-free over a 12-month period; bi-weekly payments would be made via automatic checking account withdrawals.

PayCheck Direct offers a 30-day in-home trial on many products; flexible return policy; no interest fees, credit checks, down payments, or

finance charges; and toll-free customer service representatives located in the U.S.

As part of this endorsement, PayCheck Direct will mail merchandise catalogs to the NYSUT membership four times per year.

NYSUT members are encouraged to shop and compare prices before making a purchase with this program and consider it as an alternative to using their credit card.

We are excited to be launching this new program in spring 2014! Join our MAP (Member Alert Program) Alert email service to be among the first to learn more about this program (visit the Member Benefits website for sign-up instructions).

You can also visit memberbenefits.nysut.org in the coming weeks for details on how to use this service or call **800-626-8101** with any questions.