

# Legislative & Political Update



## It Is That Time Of The Year Again!

Now that the 2016 state legislative session has begun, you will receive NYSUT's bi-weekly Legislative and Political Update, to keep you informed about legislative and political action throughout our state. PAC leaders will continue to receive alerts on an as-needed basis.

If you haven't done so already, please join the NYSUT Member Action Center (MAC) and encourage your members, parents, community friends, coalition partners and allies to do the same. On the web, <https://mac.nysut.org> or download the MAC App on your smart phone or tablet for seamless alerts and updates.

## What Happens Next?

Now that the Executive Budget has been introduced, the NYS Assembly and Senate will begin to hold joint budget hearings to gather information on funding issues and to help them move forward in formulating their respective one-house budgets.

You were emailed NYSUT's preliminary analysis of the Executive Budget. NYSUT will continue to meet with legislators to advocate for our priorities and to discuss our concerns with the proposal. You can view NYSUT's press release on the Executive Budget here:

[NYSUT Press Release on Executive Budget](#)

NYSUT will continue to add letters to its MAC site based on proposals outlined in the Executive Budget and our legislative priorities.

## Tax Cap Update

For the 2016-17 school year, the tax levy limit has been set at a devastatingly low 0.12 percent, before adjustments for exemptions. This near zero tax levy limit will have serious negative effects on our schools.

Eliminating and amending the undemocratic tax cap continues to be a high priority for NYSUT, both in the courts and at the Capitol. A true two percent tax cap would have generated approximately \$700 million for our local schools and students.

NYSUT will continue to pursue legislation on the tax cap, addressing the tax levy limit, supermajority requirement, and necessary exemptions, to ensure New York's schools and students can be adequately supported.

## **ACTION OF THE WEEK**

**Say no to backdoor voucher schemes that benefit the rich and rob public schools! Click on the link below:**  
[https://mac.nysut.org/faxlegislators/widget/issue/453#issuesheadline\\_mobile](https://mac.nysut.org/faxlegislators/widget/issue/453#issuesheadline_mobile)

**Help fix and amend the cap! Click on the link below:**  
[https://mac.nysut.org/faxlegislators/widget/issue/456#issuesheadline\\_mobile](https://mac.nysut.org/faxlegislators/widget/issue/456#issuesheadline_mobile)



[mac.nysut.org](https://mac.nysut.org)

Last year, NYSUT and its coalition partners secured changes to the tax cap law which allowed the Commissioner of the Department of Taxation and Finance to write regulations and guidelines exempting BOCES capital projects and PILOTS. Unfortunately, no changes in regulations or guidance have been provided to date. We will lobby for stronger language this legislative session to compel the commissioner to make changes to the law, as the Legislature intended.

Lastly, Assemblywoman Michele Schimel (Long Island) introduced A.9026, which creates a "two percent is two percent property tax cap act."

## **U.S. Supreme Court Hears Case Against Agency Fee Payments**

On Monday, January 11, the U.S. Supreme Court heard oral arguments for *Friedrichs vs. California Teachers Association* — a case that challenges agency fee payments. The outcome of the case could threaten the future of public unions across the nation by decimating public union solidarity and finances.

The plaintiffs in *Friedrichs* contend collective bargaining is a form of political activity and want the court to allow workers represented by unions to become "free riders" — meaning they would not have to pay any dues despite the fact their salary, health coverage and retirement protections are secured through union representation. A 1977 Supreme Court ruling upheld the right of unions to require the payment of dues by workers represented in collective bargaining; many

Legislative & Political Update is written by NYSUT's Legislative & Political Department.

Any questions can be referred to this department at:

NYSUT 800 Troy-Schenectady Road – Latham, NY 12110-2455

(518) 213-6000 fax (518) 213-6409

state laws on the issue are based on this nearly forty year old ruling.

The court will issue their ruling sometime before the close of its session in June.



UFT retiree, Nina Tribble, and Executive Vice President Andy Pallotta in Washington D.C. fighting to keep workers' voice in the workplace.

### **Higher Education Update**

In December, Assemblymember Deborah Glick chair of the Higher Education Committee, held a hearing in Albany to discuss the changing student demographics in higher education and New York state educational opportunity programs. Representatives from UUP and PSC testified on the importance of strengthening the Tuition Assistance Program, other opportunity programs and ensuring access to higher education for economically and educationally disadvantaged students.

For the 2016 legislative session, NYSUT is urging the Legislature to pay its fair share in funding CUNY and SUNY, including a real maintenance of effort to cover mandatory costs (collective bargaining, energy and other inflationary costs); to provide an increase of \$250 per full-time equivalent student base aid increase for community colleges and develop a five-year plan to honor its commitment to fund 40 percent of community college operating costs; and to strengthen the Tuition Assistance Program.

### **Health Care Update**

Last Thursday, the NYS Assembly passed the "Safe Staffing for Quality Care Act" which is a bill that establishes minimum staffing ratios for certain types of hospital units and nursing homes, based on patient needs and a nurse's shift assignments.

Assemblywoman Aileen Gunther, who is also an RN, is the bill's (A.8580) new sponsor, previously Health Committee chairman, Dick Gottfried, sponsored the bill. This piece of legislation is one that other health care unions (PEF, CWA, NYSNA) collectively rally around each year, as we all believe its enactment will not only protect workers and create a safer workplace environment, but will also greatly increase patient safety and the quality of health care in New York state. The

NYS Senate has not yet introduced their "same-as" bill, which is needed if this legislation is to advance in the state legislature.

The NYSUT Health Care Professional Council and the NYSUT Legislative and Political Department will continue to champion this bill's enactment and will hold its annual Health Care Professional's Lobby Day on May, 10 in Albany. For information on attending the event, please call Stacey Burgess at (518)213-6000 Ext. 6606 or e-mail her at [sburgess@nysutmail.org](mailto:sburgess@nysutmail.org).

### **A Step In The Right Direction**

Last week, the Senate passed legislation (S.6377) which would completely eliminate the school funding loss of \$434 million through the Gap Elimination Adjustment (GEA). Assembly Speaker Carl Heastie publicly said his house plans to address the GEA. NYSUT strongly supports both the elimination of the GEA and re-starting and fully funding Foundation Aid for all public schools.

### **At The Capitol**

Today, Andy Pallotta testified before members of the Senate Finance Committee and Assembly Ways and Means Committee on the Proposed 2016-17 Executive Budget for Elementary and Secondary Education. He highlighted NYSUT's priorities on: school funding, community schools, receivership, Teacher Centers, the property tax cap, charter schools, pre-kindergarten expansion, BOCES, career and technical education, early career high school expansion, the Parental Choice in Education Act, 4201, 4410, 853, Special Act schools, special education management flexibility, and labor and pension issues.

You can view NYSUT's press release here:

[Press Release on Proposed 2016-17 Executive Budget for Elementary and Secondary Education](#)

### **National Update**

Congress made permanent the federal educator tax deduction, which allows educators to deduct eligible out-of-pocket classroom spending up to \$250. The deduction was expanded to include eligible professional development expenses.

#### **CALENDAR OF EVENTS IN ALBANY**

##### **January 2016**

January 25	Health and Medicaid Hearing
January 27	Joint Legislative Hearing on Elementary and Secondary Education

##### **February 2016**

February 1	NYSUT Legislative Reception
February 12-14	NYS Association of Black and Puerto Rican Legislators, Inc. Caucus Weekend
February 24-25	Higher Ed Lobby Day

##### **March 2016**

March 2	BOCES Lobby Day
March 7-8	Committee of 100 Lobby Day
March 18-20	SOMOS El Futuro

Doc 40776 - 01/27/16