

MEMORANDUM

TO: NYSUT Board of Directors
Political Action Coordinators
VOTE-COPE Coordinators
Local Presidents

FROM: Andrew Pallotta, Executive Vice President

DATE: June 24, 2014

SUBJECT: 2014 Legislative Session Wrap-up

Following a very intense last few weeks of session, the Legislature adjourned on June 20th, in the late evening. For NYSUT's lobbying team, the last weeks, and more specifically, the last few days of the legislative calendar, were as much about opposing bad bills as they were about supporting good ones. NYSUT lobbied in support of the following issues that passed both houses of the Legislature.

HITTING PAUSE ON APPR

NYSUT staff worked around the clock, negotiating with legislative leaders and the governor to provide protections for teachers and principals who would be adversely effected because of students' scores on Common Core-aligned state tests. Under the bill, educators who receive a "developing" or "ineffective" overall composite rating would have their scores recalculated without the components that are based on the 3-8 ELA/math state tests. If the new scores are higher, then the original ratings could not be used against educators in employment or tenure decisions.

ROCHESTER SCHOOL FACILITIES MODERNIZATION ACT

This legislation authorizes Phase 2 of the City of Rochester school facilities modernization program, allowing for the expenditure of up to \$435 million for the reconstruction of up to 26 schools in the City School District. It also amends the governance structure of the program to make it more accountable and transparent.

BOCES OUT-OF-STATE CONTRACTING

This legislation enables Boards of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES) to enter into contracts with out-of-state school districts and maintain their programs and services while also providing cost savings to both the state and property taxpayers. Students from neighboring states help to lower the cost of providing these services and programs. BOCES will continue to offer low-cost programs and services to component school districts while preserving and maintaining jobs in rural and suburban areas in our state.

CREDIT FOR ALL MILITARY SERVICE

After over a decade of advocacy, public employees who served our nation in the military, regardless of when their service took place, will have the opportunity to purchase retirement service credit prior to their retirement.

In April, NYSUT joined forces with unions across the state to seek changes to current state law which allows public employees who are former military personnel the option to purchase service credit in the public retirement systems for service rendered during various conflict such as World War II, Korea, and Vietnam. Service outside of these specific time frames, like the current conflict in Afghanistan, had

not been eligible for credit toward retirement. By limiting this benefit to specified periods, thousands of teachers and other public employees who served our nation with honor and distinction have been prevented from obtaining service credit toward their retirement.

This legislation honors those who served by extending the credit purchase opportunity to all veterans prior to their retirement; recognizing the great personal sacrifices our military personnel make to assure the continued security of our nation.

STUDENT SELF-MEDICATION

This bill allows licensed health care providers to inject prescribed medications in an emergency. It also permits school boards to authorize licensed health care providers to train unlicensed school personnel to inject prescribed glucagon or epinephrine in an emergency where a licensed health care provider is not available. Moreover, this measure allows students with asthma or a respiratory disease to carry and use prescribed inhalers, and students with allergies to carry and use epinephrine auto injectors (EpiPens). It also permits students diagnosed with diabetes can carry and administer prescribed insulin and glucagon medication and equipment to check blood glucose and ketone levels with written permission.

edTPA

NYSUT was successful in securing a delay in the implementation of the edTPA as a teaching certification requirement until June 30, 2015. The union was also instrumental in the State Education Department's decision to establish a taskforce that will examine, among other things, the rubrics and handbooks associated with the edTPA. Representatives from NYSUT, UUP, and the PSC will serve on the taskforce. NYSUT will continue to work with its higher education affiliates to ensure that our member's voices are heard on this important issue.

HEALTH CARE for PART-TIME FACULTY

NYSUT supported the Professional Staff Congress (PSC) in their successful efforts to secure the continuance of health care for PSC/CUNY part-time and contingent members in New York City's Health Insurance Program.

SUNY/CUNY CAPITAL FUNDING

During the final days of session, NYSUT was successful in securing an additional \$49 million in capital funding for SUNY and an additional \$67 million for CUNY.

REDUCING RISK AND DIVERSIFYING INVESTMENTS

NYSUT was successful in achieving changes to the retirement and social security law that increases the public pension system's ability to diversify investments of pension fund monies. This change will allow fund managers to better respond effectively to mitigate market volatility and allow for greater investment returns, greatly benefitting the public pension funds in years to come.

INVISIBLE VICTORIES ("Bad Bills Killed")

The NYSUT Legislation Department worked to stop many bills – either in committee or on the legislative calendar, such as: a backdoor voucher bill that would have benefitted millionaires and

billionaires; a measure to move the school board election date in Buffalo from May to November; a proposal to allow charter schools to operate multiple sites; and a bill that would impose a significant and costly mandate to New York City public schools concerning special education placements.

NYSUT also stopped: anti-boycott legislation that would strip state aid from a college or university and that would violate academic freedom and protected speech; legislation that would have created a three-year accelerated proficiency degree program at four state-operated institutions; a bill that would authorize computer science courses to count towards liberal arts content at institutions of higher learning; legislation that would have created separate operating accounts for the three SUNY hospitals and would have severely limited the funding available for these hospitals, creating an even more untenable financial situation than they are already experiencing; and legislation that would have set up New York's own "pay it forward, pay it back" tuition scheme, putting a terrible future burden on our college students.

LOOKING FORWARD

On the whole, there were many things to be proud of this year, however, there is still much more to do.

- Budget/Funding

NYSUT will continue to strongly advocate for increased funding for our public schools to ensure that all students in this state receive a sound, basic education. This includes ending the Gap Elimination Adjustment and pushing strongly for adequate levels of foundation aid funding. We will continue to strongly lobby for increased state funding for SUNY and CUNY four-year institutions, community colleges and our SUNY hospitals so that these institutions will be able to provide their students and patients with the academic and health care services they need and deserve. This includes amending the current maintenance of effort provision and ensuring that the state honors that provision.

- Programmatic Issues

In K-12, we will continue to fiercely fight to address our members' concerns regarding testing, the inappropriate use of test scores, and the developmental appropriateness of the common core. Moreover, we are committed to strongly advocating for necessary and critical changes to the current teacher evaluation system to ensure that our members are evaluated fairly.

In addition, NYSUT will continue its efforts to make changes to the undemocratic tax cap that has had negative financial and educational impacts on our school districts, students and members.

In higher education, NYSUT will continue to strongly lobby for the "Public Higher Education Quality Initiative" which was launched this year as part of an overall aggressive higher education campaign under the banner, "Keep NY a State of Mind." In only its first year, we have already gained progress on parts of this legislative agenda. The state increased the maximum TAP award by \$165 and provided significant funding increases for community colleges and our SUNY hospitals over the last few years.

Furthermore, the NY Dream Act has garnered gubernatorial and significant legislative support and is poised for passage in the near future. In addition, we have made significant strides in our call for a public higher education full-time faculty and professional staff endowment. The issue was considered during the budget process this year and we obtained both SUNY's and CUNY's support on the issue. We now have a bill introduced by both higher education committee chairs in both houses of the Legislature. NYSUT will continue to push strongly for the enactment of this important legislation.

On the social justice front, NYSUT will continue to push for the passage of justice for farm workers legislation, GENDA, and the Women's Equality Act.

I thank each of you for your advocacy during this session. NYSUT members sent 253,956 faxes to lawmakers on our issues since January first of this year. We had five separate lobby days and participated in the Black and Puerto Rican Caucus weekend and Somos el Futuro. Your activism is what moves this union ahead.

I look forward to seeing you at the Presidents Endorsement Conference in August. Thank you once again for your continued support and advocacy.