

MONTHLY REPORT TO MEMBERSHIP

February, 2020

TRS (Teacher Retirement Seminar)

This year's seminar was held at Central HS in the Chorus Room. It was well attended by over 75 members. Ron Gross, the Long Island representative for the NYSTRS presented. Bert Thomas our 457 representative was not in attendance but important information was disseminated by me to assist members to set up their 457 tax deferred account.

OT's and PT's DISTRICT #13

As has been reported in the past, 3 individuals are requesting to become members of VSTA. Noele Villa, myself and our LRS Steve Clements have met on several occasions with these individuals. At this point the terms and conditions of their proposed first contract have been drafted, along with a proposed pay scale. We are now awaiting action by the District 13 BOE. If the BOE votes in the affirmative, VSTA will have its 8th unit for which we will have sole bargaining rights and responsibilities.

SPECIAL EDUCATION CERTIFICATION

As you may be aware the State Education Department is looking to enforce a long standing position that it has held on Special Education Certification. VSTA has been informing all High School Special Education Teachers, via direct email, of NYSUT sponsored workshops designed to assist teachers in acquiring the needed course work. This only affects High School Special Education Teachers. The courses are offered on a first come first serve bases, and are provided at low and sometimes no cost to the teachers. As long as the process has been started by June 2020 teachers should have no problem maintaining their certification. Additionally Assistant Superintendent, Cliff Odell has met with all Special Education Departments in the Central High School District.

LAWRENCE RALLY

SAVE THE DATE. The Lawrence Teachers Association is in the 9th year without a contract. They are planning a rally on Sunday, April 26th. It is tentatively scheduled to begin at 9:00 am at the High School. We are hoping for a large turn out from VSTA to show support for our brothers and sisters in Lawrence. Details to follow.

LONG ISLAND PRESIDENT COUNCIL (LIPC)

The LIPC conference took place the weekend of January 31st. I attended multiple workshops and meetings. The 4 major speakers I attended were Ron Gross, NYSTRS Representative and future 2nd VP of NYSUT. His presentation was similar to the one he gave on January 14th at Central High School. I also attended a presentation by Lena Ackerman, Associate General Counsel for NYSUT. Lena spoke about the protections for Union's as a whole and their elected officers and officials. She also spoke about the specific cases NYSUT handles in a given year. She gave statistics on the amount and types of cases NYSUT handled in the last 2 years. She specifically highlighted 3020a, Part 83's and Section 75 cases. She also spoke about the cases that NYSUT does not handle. Cases such as criminal prosecution and defense. Civil cases targeting administration and the District. Cases involving one member seeking action against another. Lena also made a point that members who contact her office directly should not expect a return call. Member "intakes" follow specific procedures beginning with the local. Additionally she mentioned that her office, which is based in NYC, will on occasion get calls that are actually intended for NYUT Legal services, in Albany. She implored local Presidents to make sure we give out the correct number when members call looking for legal assistance in

creating a will, or closing on a house, she doesn't do that. The last topic Lena spoke on was the Post JANUS world. She praised Long Island for how few members have been lost as a result of the JANUS decision. Related to the JANUS decision, Lena emphasized that non-members are not entitled to legal benefits or representation, and should not contact her office. Andy Pallotta, NYSUT President spoke about the bus tour he was on crossing the state speaking about the potential changes to the State Regents, and the possible changes to High School graduation requirements. Andy also spoke about RA resolutions related to the tax cap, and the state of the organization as a whole. He also praised Long Island again for having the lowest % of members opting out of Union membership. He expressed concern that numbers may grow as time goes on, especially off of Long Island. The last presenter, AFT President Randi Weingarten focused her remarks on the upcoming presidential election, a Democratic Candidate even called her during her presentation, (Joe Biden). She explained no formal decision has been made to endorse or support any candidate at this time. She did ask the room in a rhetorical way what we thought of an endorsement, no response was forthcoming. As you know VSTA has its own Political Action Committee chaired by Julian Farrell (S). VSTA provided members the choice to contribute or not. Only members who still elect to contribute to VOTE/COPE have the potential of money being directed to political candidates via NYSUT or AFT, most members are off VOTE/COPE payroll deduction. Randi's closing remarks were about the devastation in Puerto Rico and the Coronavirus and AFT's response to both.

TA GREIVANCE

A potential grievance was investigated by myself, VP's Joe Mangini, Patrice Davidson, Grievance Chair John Reece and TA Unit Leader Karen Wallace. A grievance was written, however the High School District has chosen to resolve the matter rather than continue the grievance process. The grievance itself involved the payment of accumulated sick days in retirement.

ERS

For the past 7 years VSTA has conducted both a TRS meeting for Teachers and Teaching Assistants, as you know this took place on January 14th. We have also been conducting an ERS meeting for Educational Related members such as EOP's (clerical), Supervisory Aides, Nurses and Classroom/Media Aides in District #13. Noele Villa is coordinating the event and it will take place on March 26th at 4:40 @ Howell Road School.

2020-2021 CALENDAR

I would like to thank everyone for the quick turn around on the calendar vote. The vote took place on February 12th and membership chose calendar "A".

CORONAVIURS

I have distributed AFT's Coronavirus Bulletin for both Teachers, School Staff and Health Care workers. I have shared this information with all 4 Districts. I can speak from experience that the High School district did take quick action. I have not heard of what the response has been from any of the Elementary Units. I would like to thank Joe Moniaci for reaching out quickly on this specific issue. The VSTA Health & Safety Committee was also made aware of the situation and the same information has been shared with them.