September 20, 2017

Pallotta: A Constitutional Convention poses a serious threat to public education

Author: Andrew Pallotta, President, NYSUT

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The following opinion piece by NYSUT President Andrew Pallotta appeared in the September 18, 2017, edition of On Board, the official publication of the New York State Association of School Board Officials. Learn more about the Constitutional Convention at www.nysut.org/concon.

A Constitutional Convention poses a serious threat to public education

Don't be fooled.

A Constitutional Convention would have nothing to do with improving New York State government and returning it to "the people." Instead, what a convention would really be about is ensuring government remains in control of political insiders and serves the interests of deep-pocketed donors.

History has shown that convention delegates mostly would be made up of politicians and their staff. A convention would be more than a publicly funded boondoggle, too - expected, by some estimates, to cost taxpayers hundreds of millions of dollars.

Just as troubling, a Constitutional Convention could spell complete disaster for New York State's public education system.

From Long Island to Plattsburgh, Buffalo to Albany, our public schools are already faced with significant challenges. Chronic underfunding continues to plague our most-needey schools. Districts statewide remain hamstrung by the unrelenting constraints of a tax cap that have diminished local control. And we now have a secretary of education in Washington who supports voucher schemes, privatization and the unregulated proliferation of charter schools nationwide.

By opening the state Constitution to a sweeping overhaul, the progress our schools have made could be permanently derailed. In fact, should voters in November approve a Constitutional Convention - which would put at risk everything from retirement security to environmental regulations that ensure clean water and air -the very protections that guarantee children access to a free, quality public education and a shot at a successful life could be stripped away altogether.

Why on Earth would we take such a risk?

When talk turns to the possibility of a Constitutional Convention, much of the focus is placed on public pensions. And, yes, a convention would most certainly result in reduced pension benefits for public-sector retirees, including classroom teachers, school administrators and other education professionals. At a time when New York State is facing a teacher shortage, the promise of a dignified retirement is an important recruiting tool for a profession where salaries have not kept pace with the private sector.

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### Important Dates for 2017-2018

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exec Board NYSUT</th>
<th>Rep Council 900 bldg. (unless noted otherwise)</th>
<th>TRIAD Meeting Maywood</th>
<th>BOCES BOARD Meeting</th>
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<tr>
<td>September 6, 2017</td>
<td>September 20, 2017 900 Bldg.-NERIC Side</td>
<td>Sept. 26, 2017</td>
<td>Sept. 18</td>
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<tr>
<td>November 1, 2017</td>
<td>November 15, 2017 900 Bldg.-Schoharie Rms. 4 PM start</td>
<td>Nov. 21, 2017</td>
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<td>04:15-6:00 PM</td>
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<td>July 17, 2017</td>
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### Capital Region BOCES Career and Technical School's Upcoming events

- Oct. 18: Open House at the Albany CTE, 6 p.m. (SkillsUSA event begins at 5:30 p.m.)
- Oct. 19: Red Cross Blood Drive at Schoharie CTE, all day.
- Nov. 1: College fair at Albany CTE, all day.
- Nov. 2: College fair at Schoharie CTE, all day.
- Nov. 5-7: SkillsUSA Fall Leadership Meeting, Albany Desmond.
- Nov. 10: Veteran’s Day – No School.
- Nov. 15: Military Day, Albany CTE campus, all day.

### Capital Region BOCES Faculty Association Leadership

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>POSITION</th>
<th>NAME</th>
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<th>WORK</th>
<th>E-Mail Address</th>
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<tbody>
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[www.crbfa.org](http://www.crbfa.org)
The retirement security of public servants who have dedicated their lives to helping children is a worthy issue to highlight when it comes to speaking out against a Constitutional Convention. But, when it comes to public education, it is far from the only issue.

The last time a Constitutional Convention was held in New York, there was a proposal to repeal the Blaine Amendment, which prohibits the use of state money to fund religious schools. Had voters not rejected this attempt, public education in our state would look very different today, and not for the better.

In a political climate where school voucher schemes are a constant threat, wealthy donors could use their influence to secure convention delegates who would push an agenda that would devastate public schools - leading to the likely loss of critically needed funding, local control and transparency.

New York State already owes its schools roughly $3.5 billion under the Campaign for Fiscal Equity court ruling. Wasting hundreds of millions of dollars - or more - on a bash for political insiders when, instead, it could be used to educate our children, is simply unconscionable.

The fact is, legislative changes can be imposed through the existing amendment process. And, what’s more, unlike a Constitutional Convention, the amendment process doesn’t cost hundreds of millions of dollars. It’s completely free.

We have a responsibility to protect the right to a quality education for all students, no matter their zip code or socio-economic status.

We have a duty to ensure that teachers and education professionals working in our schools have access to the resources necessary so they can deliver to students the best education possible.

We have an obligation to the communities we serve. By placing our bets on a Constitutional Convention, we are gambling with the future of our children. It is not worth the risk.

It is incumbent upon all of us who work to protect public education in New York State to vote "No" in November.

Andrew Pallotta is president of New York State United Teachers, a statewide union with more than 600,000 members in education, human services and health care.

BOCES Board Meeting NOTES
September 18, 2018

- Meeting opened with Anita Murphy and Joe Dragone reviewing the draft proposal for the new BOCES Functional Organization Structure.
- With the change at the top, districts are wondering whom do they contact for what.
- Anita Murphy, District Superintendent, will run the Chief Officers meeting, work with NERIC as they are being asked often by SED and JMT, Tech Valley Policies
- Joe Dragone, Senior Executive Officer, will work with Lynn Wells, Tech Valley Programs, Mark Jones and business officials
- On the chart (color coded) blue were services provided to districts and grey internal services.
- Anita will work with Legislative Advocacy
- Joe and Lynne will oversee Special Ed, CTE, Adult Ed, Alternative ED
- Anita and Lynne will oversee Educational School Support (ESS)
- Joe and Mark will run BOCES Service Committee (formerly Management Services)
- Robert Zordan will oversee HR for BOCES Staff
- Joe and Mark will oversee Labor Relations which is a service provided to districts
- DS (Anita) will continue to recommend appointments of all staff to the Board.
- NERIC, under Anita will coordinate all BOCES office services
- Per Anita, the Education Commissioner is most concerned with processes that impacts component districts.
- We have a chance to provide for the entire state.
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- Standards – Curriculum and how they affect professional development – remember full rollout by 2021.
- Might look like:
  1 – Upgrading standards for professional development
  2 – Regionally – Curriculum Units Districts will build lesson plans hopefully with our help.
- Q – What is being done so we don’t test on a standard they haven’t received yet?
- A – No tests for K, 1 or 2; provide universal Pre-K for 3 year olds; mandated attendance for Kindergarten in some cities.
- Q – What about “Opt Out”?
- A – Teacher/Principal Evaluations are off the table (not connected to testing) – federally
- A – How you strategize around this issue with parents and teachers to lower the stress in this area
- Country Wide – cannot opt out – called Test Refusal
- Meeting ended at 7 PM

By Susan Kusalonis
First of all, I would like to acknowledge the 17 years of service given by Doug Harple as President. After just a few months on the job, I realize that his was no small feat, and special recognition is more than due him. I also know his loss is significant, particularly in CTE where he taught for so many years, so I want you to get to know me just a bit.

I have been a Speech-Language Pathologist in the Special Education Division for 28 years now, and have been an active Association member since day one. I have served as a Representative almost always, on the Executive Board as Secretary for a term or two, and most recently as Vice President. Both my parents and my grandparents were public-sector employees and proud union members. I have been up-close-and-personal with union activism more than a few times stretching back to my childhood in Hancock, NY, and I sincerely hope my Mom can see me now...I think she would be proud! I am sure both my children, Maire Grace and Andrew, my husband Greg, and many friends and colleagues would vouch for the fact that outside of my family, education, labor, politics and equal rights are my passions, and, most days, in that order. I was taught and believe to my core that you need to stand up and be counted, even if sometimes you’re standing alone, and that to step up, be it on behalf of your community, your children’s or students school organizations, or on behalf of your colleagues...these are the very best callings you can serve.

As I’m sure you’re aware, unions are facing some tough challenges in these times. It matters not on which side of the political spectrum you find yourselves, organized labor is under attack. I want you to understand that I believe in my heart that everything that we say and do here matters...it matters to this agency, it matters to our election district, it matters across the state of New York. In fact, it matters across the United States. If I didn’t think so, I wouldn’t waste your time or mine here today. These concerns that we have across divisions, these issues that are so important, are not only our own; they are collective concerns. We cannot answer any one of these concerns as one person, and yet it has never been more important that we speak with one voice. I believe we can do that through our Association.

To that end, the Executive Board and I have initiated a series of meetings over the summer, and continuing into Fall, with division’s and central administration, to more clearly understand the changing needs of our component districts, to represent your diverse needs and concerns across divisions, and to be a more active voice in the development of new structures, programs and initiatives throughout our BOCES as a new administration comes on board. We were privileged to be involved in the selection processes both for the new District Superintendent, Anita Murphy, and Senior Executive Officer, Joe Dragone. On behalf of the Faculty Association and its members, we welcome them sincerely. We look forward to creating a strong and productive working relationship with them both, as well as with current administration, to meet the needs of staff and students alike in achieving our collective goals as educators here at Capital Region BOCES, and as members of New York State United Teachers.

Just for a moment, I would like to acknowledge members of the Faculty Association’s Executive Board.

Dan Darpino, Vice President
Deb Sorvari, Treasurer,
Barb Burnham, Secretary
Flora Fasoldt, Vice President SPED Teachers Chapter
Erica Kane, Vice President CTE Teachers Chapter
Colleen Condolora, Vice President Teaching Assistants/Aides Chapter
Gina Hanley, Vice President Service Chapter
Kristen Lashway, Grievance Chairperson
Susan Kusalonis, Membership Chair and TRIAD Editor

I realize that for many who don’t know me, this brief history I have presented does nothing to tell you what kind of President I want to be. I want you to know first and foremost, I am just one member of this team acknowledged here. Simply put, we are here for you, and we want to know you. We need to know what your concerns are. We need to know what issues are important to you. We need to know what it is that you need from your Association. And, just as important, you need to know what it is your Union needs from you. So we look forward to seeing you at scheduled member meetings beginning this fall, and we ask for your commitment. Come. Hear what we have in store for our organization. Be part of the conversation. “Be the Union”!

Thank you. Oh, and Welcome back!”

Sherry Karcher-Hewitt, President
Dear Constituents:

Welcome back everyone, I hope your new school year has gotten off to an excellent and productive start. It was nice seeing so many familiar faces at Opening Day and having a moment to speak with many of you privately.

As you are aware, there have been many changes occurring within our Divisions and BOCES district-wide. The Special Education Division currently is being overseen by Interim Deputy Director, Rita Levay, replacing retired Director, Dr. Peter Taormina. BOCES will be interviewing shortly for a replacement for Rita, who has kindly agreed to stay on temporarily. During her tenure in the Special Education division, Rita is initiating the changes the Special Education Redesign Committee recommended. One of the first initiatives is the Literacy redesign. Each Teaching Assistant/Aide will be trained on the Literacy initiative and each should have received an email stating when their training will be held. Remember, once you have received your training to log into your MyLearningPlan to record your training so you are eligible to receive your CTLE hours for certification purposes.

On the certification front, please be very vigilant as to your status of certification requirements. Letters have been sent to several Teaching Assistants over the summer addressing requirements they have not met to maintain their Teaching Assistant certification with the State Education Department. If you are unsure when your certification deadlines are, please check your TEACH account or contact BOCES Certification officer Kenneth Ziegler to be updated. Unfortunately, if your certification is out of compliance, BOCES will move each person into an Aide position, if one is available, until your requirements are met. Sometimes it is as simple as a High School diploma not on record or a mandated workshop not recorded that is missing. Please stay on top of your certification deadlines, it is imperative in order to maintain your status as a certified Teaching Assistant.

NYSUT will be offering a School Related Professional Conference on October 21-22, 2017 at the Desmond. If you are interested in attending please register on the NYSUT website and notify Debbie Sorvari, our Faculty Association Treasurer, of your intent to attend. We are limited to the number of staff attending so it will be a first come first serve status. NYSUT also offers, online workshops designed for Teaching Assistants, through Education and Learning Trust. As a facilitator of these trainings, I can attest they are very well received by everyone who utilizes this method of obtaining professional development. It is convenient, at your own pace and very informative. The cost is $25 for each workshop training and you will receive 3 CTLE hours for the workshop. Remember, if you are a Level III you have a 100 hour mandated requirement, every five years, for professional development in order to maintain your certification.

I will be compiling my lists for each of my Reps as to who you can contact if you have a minor question. If your Rep is unsure of the answer, they will notify me to assist you. Of course, you can always reach out to me first if that is what you prefer. On another note, I am looking for a Rep to represent our Career and Tech buildings. If you can spare a few hours a month and meet once a month and attend Rep Council, please contact me.

Enjoy your new school year, and remember to look out for any new employees who may need some guidance. If anyone has any questions, please feel free to contact me and I will be happy to assist you. Welcome back!

In Solidarity, Colleen Condolora
Greetings Retirees and All,

We’re back! Are you? We hope so. Hasn’t it been a short summer, with much of July filled with rainy days, the absence of any 90-degree sweltering days in August and arriving at the end of September?

Our world has recently seen so many tragic events; Hurricanes Harvey, Irma, Jose and Maria, earthquakes, wild fires in the West, reports of nuclear weapons in No. Korea, hackers, the Las Vegas massacre, protesters and demonstrators carrying symbols of a regime that brought about World War II. It caused me to shudder, seeing them, and I can only imagine the emotions of the surviving veterans who fought in that war.

On the positive side, we saw our America as a shining star when we witnessed the unselfish heroism of so many, who came to the rescue of those at the mercy of rising water in Houston and those who carried the injured and consoled the dying in Las Vegas. It broke our heart to see the anguish filled faces of people who escaped with little but the clothing they wore. Many carried their beloved pet and we understand. We grieve with those whose lives are forever changed, in just minutes, by a lunatic and we cannot imagine having everything you own, that defined your life, become a pile of ashes.

The situations in Texas, Florida, Puerto Rico, the Caribbean, California and L.V., gives us a better perspective on our own responses to the daily events of our life. How often we complain about trivialities. How often we take for granted our comfortable dry bed, our electrical power, clean running water and just being alive to see another day. We have so much for which to be grateful. What a difficult time for seniors, who just do not have the energy to clean up and start over again. On our retiree membership list, we have 18 who have retired to Florida, 2 in California and none in Texas or the islands.

We wish our brand new retirees the joy of this first year of freedom as you finally get to explore the adventures longed for. Enjoy the euphoria of being free to do what you want, when you want. For many of us who are long-retired, frequently we find that the dictates of life often determine our direction. It may not be what we want, but learning to accept it and finding the good parts and the good people in it can bring us contentment and calm with our life as it is.

PERSONALS

Our condolences to the family of Helen Reid who passed away in June, at the home of her daughter in Illinois. Helen worked at Maywood in the 1980’s and 90’s.

Keith Trask, formerly of Schoharie, passed away in June 2017. He resided in Zephyrhills, FL for the past 15 years. Keith and his wife operated Barbecue Delights Catering. He enjoyed traveling, attending Blue Grass Festivals, was a member of Schoharie Kiwanis and collected cans to raise funds for an orphanage in Tampa. Keith is survived by his wife Ellen, his daughter Marjorie and son Ronald. Memorial contributions may be made to Zephyrhills Foundation, 7050 Gall Blvd., Zephyrhills, FL 33541 or to the Hope Children’s Home, 11415 Hope International Drive, Tampa, FL 33625.

We grieve the passing of our friend Lois Abramson on July 3, 2017. Born in Brooklyn, Lois was predeceased by her husband Morrie and is survived by her children Janice, Charles, David and Neil. Lois worked with Morrie at the Glenville Pharmacy for 40 years and as a Special Education Teacher’s Aide at Capital Region BOCES. She was an advocate for people with disabilities.

Lois brought sunshine into our classroom, she loved life and captured our holiday events and celebrations on film. Donations in memory of Lois may be made to: Eddy Senior Care, 504 State St., Schenectady, NY, 12305 or Capital Region BOCES Spring Prom, 900 Watervliet-Shaker Rd. Albany, NY, 12205.
I can tell you this, I am not a social media fan. I have never used Facebook. I don’t want to Facebook nor do I have any desire to consider using it in the future. My plate is full as it is. I have a full-time job with full-time family and religious obligations. I have a work email address and my personal email that is enough for me to keep up with. I have found that some websites that I use, ask to sign into their sites through Facebook. They offer special promotions, cash drawing or even coupons. I can live without their perks. I will not do something that I know I will regret later. I want my privacy, I need my privacy. I do enough in the workplace and in the community for people to know me. I am not “lost” so I don’t want to be “found” or connect with old friends, former classmates, and even former students. I have a strong dislike of my privacy being threatened.

I have missed parties and other friend or family functions because a person did not take the time to send me an email or even make a phone call. Have group emails become obsolete? Has social media cornered the market on a 5 minute or less personal phone call? Invitations and even thank-you notes by snail mail (yup, the kind you put stamps on) seem to have become a thing of the past. Is that why the Hallmark stores are disappearing? Email, phone call, or snail mail, it still would be nice to be included.

I do have family and friends who have stopped using their social medial accounts or have even deleted them. But are they really gone?

In a recent article in the Daily Gazette, (Saturday, March 25, 2017, pg. A6) titled How to Log off of Facebook forever, offers information you may not know in the event you want to delete your social media profile.

The first question you really need to think about before making a decision is “why are you leaving?” Are you worried that you have given out too much personal information about yourself and you want to protect your privacy? Deleting your social media accounts to cover your “digital footprints” is not always deleting it altogether. It may be simply “deactivating it,” said Henry Carter, a professor of computer sciences at Villanova University. “Even when you close an account some sites might retain your data and keep an “Inactive” version of your profile just in the event you “decide to return.”

How to Delete Your Accounts

Bruce R. Mendelsohn, a digital social marketing consultant suggests sites such as accountkiller.com, desateame.com, and justdelete.me.com will link you to pages where you can delete your profiles and they provide step-by-step instructions and useful tips. Still, when you are deleting a social media profile it is important to check whether the process actually deletes your profile or deactivates it. All the time you have put in to disappear may not be as foolproof as you would like to think.

Don’t Forget Other Sites

Some of the biggest sites you may think of like Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Google Plus, and Instagram; may be the most popular and most traveled, don’t forget about others like dating sites, blogs, Flickr, eBay, Amazon, Craigslist and PayPal, et. al.

It is a matter of being as responsible about your social media presence as your personal presence.

Now that I have read this article, I have to wonder; do I have digital footprints out there in cyber world that I did not mean to create? Nothing like the perks and pitfalls of the World Wide Web.

!!!!!! ATTENTION!!!!!

WHEN YOU VOTE ON NOVEMBER 7TH, TURN YOUR BALLOT OVER AND VOTE “NO” ON THE CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION. FAILURE TO VOTE ON THIS PROPOSAL WILL BE SCANNED AS A “POSITIVE” VOTE.

WE MUST PROTECT:
*Free public education
*Workman’s Compensation
*Collective Bargaining
*Adirondacks and Catskills
*Pensions
*Union membership
*Social Welfare Needs

The estimated cost of a convention would be $350 million, with no time-line for completion.
The TRIAD is published monthly for the Capital Region BOCES Faculty Association Membership. We appreciate any comments or suggestions you may have.

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**October things to do**

**Avoid fallen-leaf dangers:** Drive cautiously—leaves can make stopping difficult and obscure potholes and road markings. Don park near leaf piles—hot exhaust from your vehicle can make them ignite. Also, don’t let kids play in leaves piled up in the street.

**Be kind to your lungs:** October is Healthy Lung Month. Protect yourself from colds and other respiratory infections, which can develop into serious illness. Improve lung function with aerobic exercise and breathing exercises. Example: With pursed lips breathe in through your nose and out for at least twice as long through your mouth.

**Try an apple a day during National Apple Month:** See the website of the US Apple Association (USApple.org) for recipes, health benefits, varieties and more.

**Check for signs of Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD):** Symptoms begin in autumn and can include depression, deceased sex drive, diminished energy, concentration problems, greater need for sleep, fatigue, increased alcohol use, junk-food cravings, social isolation, suicidal thoughts and/or weight gain. What may help: Special SAD lamps...foods rich in omega-3 fatty acids, such as salmon and other oily fish ...outdoor activities...a regular sleep schedule...vitamin D.

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Please let either know if someone needs cheering up, get well or condolences.

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