



Connect

NEWSLETTER OF THE WESTCHESTER COMMUNITY COLLEGE FEDERATION OF TEACHERS

Nº 4

SEPTEMBER 2017

AT LAST!

Our struggle for a fair contract was waged for six years – under three College presidents and two presidents of WCCFT – and punctuated by a declaration of impasse and a round of mediation. But at last, with the August 14 signing of the Memorandum of Agreement by chief negotiators Judy Langer and Micheel Wittenberg, an end is in sight.

The MOA has been disseminated to members by email. Its terms will be discussed at the September 6 membership meeting and special sessions on September 7, 9, and 26.

Before it becomes contractually binding, the proposed agreement must be approved on three levels:

- 1 by WCCFT members, who vote on ratification on 10/4,
- 2 by WCC Trustees, who consider the agreement after its approval by the union, and
- 3 by Westchester County government.

If approved by all parties, the contract expires on August 31, 2018. In other words, we need to prepare for new negotiations almost immediately.

The WCCFT leadership presents this MOA to the membership not as the solution to all our needs for fair remuneration and reasonable working conditions, but as the outcome of an extraordinarily difficult struggle and a product of our commitment to hold the line against further erosion of our real wages and to seek at least some tangible improvements for ALL members from the most senior full-timer to the newest adjunct.

**Learn about/discuss the MOA
(all meetings TEC-107):**

Membership Meeting: Sept. 6, 11 am

Special Information Sessions

**Sept. 7: 4 pm (full-timers' issues),
5 pm (adjuncts)**

Sept. 9: 2 pm (adjuncts)

Sept. 26: 4 pm (retirement incentive)

Ratification Meeting: Oct. 4, 11 am



WE'VE GOT THE POWER . . .

. . . to defend our contract politically. As County Executive Astorino seeks re-election to a third term, we should recall his demagogic treatment of our campus CSEA's duly ratified contract, his sharp cuts in county employment in healthcare, public safety, and other areas, and all the public employee contracts that remain expired as our fellow unionists resist further hollowing out of the middle class.

Much is at stake in this year's election, potentially including our own contract. Labor in general and WCCFT in particular can play an important role in changing county leadership. Not only are we among the larger NYSUT affiliates locally, but unlike big teachers unions in Yonkers, New Rochelle, Mt. Vernon, etc., we are unique in our ability to endorse candidates for county executive and county legislator. NYSUT policy limits the scope of its affiliates' political action to candidates for offices that affect their budgets

and contracts. Thus, for example, Yonkers Federation of Teachers can only endorse those running for city offices.

A look at the last County Executive race further suggests a strategic role that WCCFT can play. In 2013, Astorino won 102,505 votes; his opponent Noam Bramson won 80,363 – a margin of 22,142 votes. NYSUT has a total Westchester membership of over 30,000. Demographically, they are overwhelmingly female and overwhelmingly Democratic, but only about half vote in every general election, and that's where we come in. By actively working for the candidates we endorse, we can tip the balance. In pre-election phone calls to other NYSUT members, we will be educators urging fellow educators to turn out on election day to defend our contracts, our schools, and our students.

See Message from the President on page 3 for more details.

WCCFT NEWS

FACULTY DEVELOPMENT WCCFT secretary Rowan Lindley announced that FD forms are available at <http://www.suny-wccft.org/2017/06/faculty-development/>.

Full-timers may apply for up to \$1500 reimbursement for a maximum of four professional activities between Sept. 1, 2016, and Aug. 31, 2017.

Adjuncts who have been at WCC at least three years (with at least one teaching/counseling/librarian/ASC assignment per year) may apply for up to \$750 for a maximum of two activities. This may include \$50 for participation in one CTS workshop.

Applicants must submit all receipts, and adjuncts must verify WCC employment history through the pertinent School Dean.

Deadline for full-time faculty applications is Sept. 30; deadline for adjunct faculty is Oct. 31.

At the April meeting, **SCHOLARCHIP COMMITTEE** chair Joanna Peters presented \$1500 checks to the four winners of the WCCFT Richard Rosell and Rafael Rodriguez Memorial Scholarships.



Pictured with Peters are (L – R) winners Nattoina Miller, Hannah Culliton, Timothy Kohany, and Juliana Macias

Photo credit: Stephen Sewell



Message from the President

Mel Bienenfeld

Late in 2015, Westchester County Executive Rob Astorino rejected the contract that had been duly ratified by members of CSEA local 9202 and approved by WCC Trustees. If he is re-elected, he may treat WCCFT members the same way. If you want our collective bargaining agreement to take effect – and to support our staff brothers and sisters in CSEA -- there's one more thing we ask you to do besides voting for ratification.

and family! The caller does not need to be a NYSUT member, a registered voter, or a Westchester resident.

The WCCFT Executive Board is also organizing other political action initiatives. First, while we voted to remain neutral in the primary races, we will NOT be neutral in the general elections. We are creating a committee to interview candidates for countywide offices. It matters who our county

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Get involved and help ensure that Astorino is defeated in November!

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Once the September 12 primary is over, NYSUT's Tarrytown office will begin coordinating phone calls to its thousands of Westchester members, urging support of whichever candidate is endorsed by WCCFT.

legislators are, and the interview process allows us to get to know the candidates personally and alert them to who we are and what we need.

This will not be done by their small office staff, but by volunteers -- by you! We're collecting names of phone volunteers right now!

Second, we'll be organizing an information sharing, voter registration, and get-out-the-vote drive among our students. Every vote will count in this election.

You can even make these calls comfortably sitting at home. NYSUT is able to send names and numbers to individual volunteers electronically in a way that respects the privacy of those called. Anyone can make the calls – ask your friends

Please volunteer. To participate in the phone bank, committee to interview candidates, or voter registration among students, contact me now at melbwccft@gmail.com. September 12 is almost here!

In solidarity, Mel

CONTRACT CORNER

Judy Langer, Vice-President

Long, long ago when we first sat down to create our negotiation demands, we knew that this was not going to be a big money contract. Administration started by offering us even less than the cost of living, but we fought that all the way. We tried to devise different ways to take care of all our members. I am proud to present a contract that I believe considers everyone: younger faculty (lower health care contributions and across-the-board dollar increases instead of percentage raises), older faculty (retirement incentives), adjunct faculty (bereavement leave and a step toward formal evaluations and increased job security), all faculty (class coverage, more flexible office hours, signing bonuses), department and curriculum chairs (a fair playing field, negotiated release-time rubric, 3-year terms).

We have already put into effect the new online agreement, which includes the hybrids.

And these are only some of the benefits. Yes, we did give the College the right to change to NYSHIP (New York State Health Insurance Program), but no one has paid or will pay any additional healthcare costs before September 2018 and possibly even later than that. So, the six years without a contract gave us a six-year moratorium on paying health care contributions and higher co-pays. If you see a member of this negotiating team (Mel Bienenfeld, Rowan Lindley, Joanna Peters, and Don Shernoff), please let them know that you appreciate that we gave it our very best!

And looking forward to the future, we will soon be ready to elect our next negotiating team and begin the next rounds of negotiations. Please be assured that I have already started our new list of demands.

VOTE "NO" TO NEW YORK STATE

CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION

BY ELLEN WASSERMAN

This November, NY State residents will vote on a referendum to hold a Constitutional Convention. Many don't realize that this referendum is on the back of the ballot and that not voting "No" might allow a minority of voters to approve this unneeded and costly event that could potentially undermine some of our most basic rights.

The NYS Constitution requires that a referendum on the so-called "Con Con" come up at least once every 20 years. The last convention, approved by special referendum and held in 1967, subsequently resulted in total defeat by the voters of every proposed constitutional revision. That failed convention cost taxpayers \$6.5 million. It is estimated that, if approved, a new convention would cost hundreds of millions of dollars.

In fact, the state constitution has been amended, rather than rewritten, more than 200 times since the last major constitutional revision in 1894. Because amendments on almost any topic can be put before the voters by the state legislature and enacted into law, there really is no need for a full revision of the constitution.

Another major concern is that some politicians in Albany would relish an opportunity to make substantial changes to the basic tenets of the state constitution. At stake could be some of our most important rights as citizens and union members:

- Right to join a union
- Collective bargaining
- Public pension benefit protections
- State provision of social welfare needs
- Prohibition of state funding of religious schools
- Access to state parks, forests, and waterways
- Environmental protections

WCCFT, along with NYSUT and many other unions and activist organizations, is speaking out against the referendum.

To protect our rights during this politically volatile time, turn the ballot over in November and vote "No" to the NYS constitutional convention.

For more information, visit: <https://www.nysut.org/resources/special-resources/sites/no-constitutional-convention>.

FT Connect strives to keep you informed about significant events affecting you as a WCC faculty member, to advocate for your rights, and to provide a forum for your views. Please send your feedback, ideas for articles, or letters to editor Richard A. Courage at richardcwccft@gmail.com.

UPCOMING EVENTS

MEMBERSHIP MEETINGS TEC 107

Sept. 6, Oct. 4, Nov. 1, Dec. 6

EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETINGS

Sept. 5 & 20, Oct. 18, Nov. 15 & 29

NYSUT C.C. CONFERENCE

Oct. 27-29, Saratoga Springs, NY

INFORMATION SESSIONS ON CONTRACT TEC-107

Sept. 07: 4 to 5 pm for full timers,
5 to 6 pm for adjuncts
Sept. 09: 2 to 3 pm for adjuncts
Sept. 26: 4 to 5 retirement incentive

2017-2018

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