



Connect

NEWSLETTER OF THE WESTCHESTER COMMUNITY COLLEGE FEDERATION OF TEACHERS

№ 5

OCTOBER 2017



DEFEND YOUR CONTRACT

VOTE FOR LATIMER

WCCFT members have spoken – loud and clear. When the ad hoc election committee tallied the votes at the October 4 meeting, they reported 175 members in favor of ratifying our proposed new contract, 23 opposed, and 3 abstaining. This overwhelming margin indicates that, whatever the agreement may lack, our members want it approved by all parties and put into effect as quickly as possible. Approval by the WCC Board of Trustees and by Westchester County government are the remaining hurdles.

Two years ago, County Executive Astorino chose to play politics and

rejected the agreement ratified by our staff brothers and sisters in CSEA. In fact, all eight county unions are currently working under expired contracts. Meanwhile, hundreds of public employees jobs have been slashed under Astorino. His opponent, George Latimer, on the other hand, has a strong and consistent history of support for public education and has pledged to approve our contract.

The record is clear. A vote for Latimer is a vote for our own well-being, for that of our fellow public employees, a vote for our schools and our students, and WCCFT has enthusiastically endorsed his candidacy.

Our own contract ratification vote followed weeks of extensive discussion of the agreement signed on August 14 by chief negotiator Judy Langer. The agreement was explained and debated at the Sept. 6 and Oct. 4 membership meetings as well as four special information sessions. The text may be found at <http://www.sunywccft.org/2017/09/memorandum-of-agreement/>. Besides holding the line against further erosion of our real wages, the new contract contains significant improvements for ALL members from the most senior full-timer to the newest adjunct. These gains are highlighted in the accompanying box.

BREAKING NEW GROUND

“ **New contract ratified at the October 4th membership meeting** ”



Some noteworthy innovations in the new contract ratified by members at the October 4th membership meeting:

1. Begins to flatten out sharp discrepancies in pay and benefits among the ranks through relatively higher pay increases and lower healthcare contributions to NYSHIP Empire Plan for junior faculty;
2. Guarantees (for the first time) that the College will provide lifetime healthcare benefits to retirees equal to the active faculty healthcare benefits at the time of retirement;
3. Offers a lump-sum retirement incentive between \$10,000 and \$15,000;
4. Authorizes adjuncts to use the existing sick leave benefit for either sick or personal leave;
5. Begins professionalizing the status of adjuncts by
 - a) making available ranks from Adjunct Assistant through Adjunct Full Professor,
 - b) extending tuition waivers to non-senior adjuncts,
 - c) adding bereavement leave,
 - d) launching a two-year pilot program that authorizes
 - i. some paid office hours for senior adjuncts teaching highly enrolled courses,
 - ii. senior adjuncts to conduct formal, paid observations of non-senior adjuncts under certain conditions,
 - iii. a path to multi-semester contracts for adjuncts rated highly by faculty observers;
6. Provides for defined terms and a clear selection process for faculty administrative positions such as department chairs;
7. Mandates negotiations for an objective standard to determine release time for faculty with administrative positions;
8. Allows all faculty to arrange for a colleague to cover their class during an anticipated absence without losing pay or a sick day;
9. Provides greater scheduling flexibility for fulltime faculty through provisions for online office hours.



*David Byrnes collecting a ballot from Richard Courage (L-R)
Photo credit: Stephen Sewell*

WCCFT NEWS

FACULTY DEVELOPMENT:

FD forms for adjunct members are currently available at <http://www.sunywccft.org/2017/06/faculty-development/>

Adjunct faculty who have completed at least three years service (with at least one teaching/counseling/librarian/ASC assignment per year) may apply for up to \$750 for a maximum of two activities completed between Sept. 1, 2016, and Aug. 31, 2017. This may include \$50 paid for participation in one CTS workshop. Applicants must submit all receipts and must also verify WCC employment history through the pertinent School Dean. Deadline for receipt of adjunct faculty development applications is Oct. 31.

Message from the President

Mel Bienenfeld

At last, we can look toward the future! For a long, long time WCCFT leaders have poured our energies into exhausting negotiations while simultaneously defending members from decisions made by Administration with no faculty consultation, no understanding of our contract, and/or no consideration of long-term consequences.

We are tired but proud of our work and especially grateful for the support that you, the members, have given us—both before the settlement and in the final ratification vote. Now it's time to improve and build on what we've done.

The #1 task is to ensure that County government approves our contract, which means doing what we can to unseat County Executive Astorino and get George Latimer elected. But we also have to remember that the new contract expires on August 31, 2018. We will soon elect a new negotiating team that will immediately begin working on demands for the next contract!

There is also a new situation at the College. Thus far, the new Provost, Dr. Vanessa Morest, has been very reasonable

and responsive when we've brought problems to her attention. We are also hopeful that the time of rapid turnover in Administration is coming to an end. The FT can play an important role in working with new administrators who realize they need to learn something about us – to really listen – before they act.

Within the Faculty, the FT has become stronger and is in a good position to become even stronger. Please help us by working on one of the initiatives our Executive Board planned last summer:

- "Cleaning up" the contract
- Reviewing the WCCFT Constitution and drawing up bylaws
- Improving our outreach to the extension sites
- Helping new members adjust to work life at WCC

It's time to get out from under the weight of six years without a contract. Time to move past "licking our wounds." It's time to move forward!

In solidarity, Mel

At last, we can look toward the future!

CONTRACT CORNER

Judy Langer, Vice-President

Is there something you were hoping we could get in our last contract negotiation, but it did not happen? Write it down and send it to me as we begin to think about the next round of collective bargaining. I am pleased to report that there have been both nominations and self-nominations for the new Negotiating Committee. Nominations are open until the end of October. New team members will bring new ideas and new energy to those who have served in the past, and you will hear their ideas at the November 1 meeting.

Surprisingly perhaps, I am still working on our ratified agreement. There needs to be more clarification of the intent of certain sections, so that they are not misconstrued in the future. We want to make sure that we, and those who follow

in the years ahead, get the full benefit of what we achieved. And yet my thoughts still turn towards the next set of negotiations and its possibilities.

As you are all well aware, this was not a money contract. We knew that from the outset and we worked around it as best we could. The next one needs to be a financially rewarding contract. Administration needs to hear that now! We need to be able to keep the talent we have as well as competitively attract first-rate new faculty. We need more money, more respect, more shared governance. We need to expand the inroads towards professionalizing the status of adjunct faculty. We need to prepare a new list of proposals for the next round of negotiations. Send me your ideas. It's not too early for us to start regrouping, but it is too early to start sharing our ideas with Administration. When we begin negotiating again, we will receive the proposals of the Miles administration. Let's see what direction that will take.

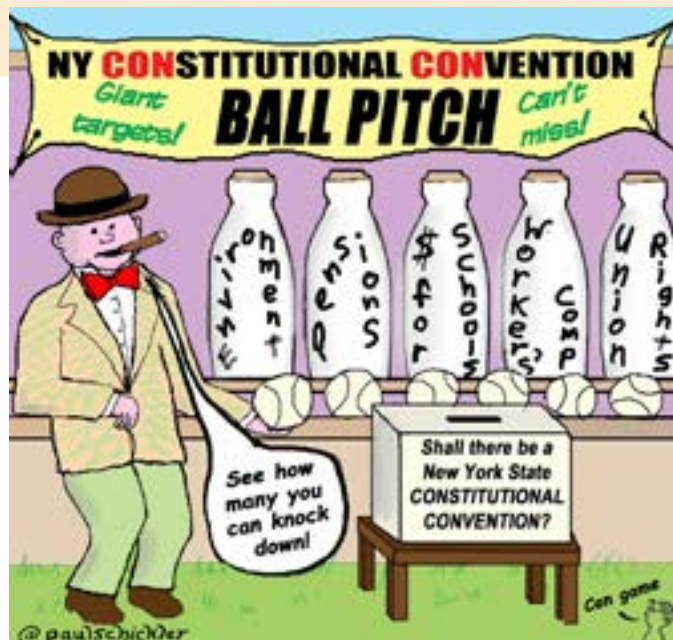
DEBATE ON NYS CON CON HEATS UP

BY ELLEN WASSERMAN

At a September 25th forum at Mahopac Library, representatives of several organizations debated pros and cons of this year's ballot proposal to hold a convention to revise the state constitution.

A speaker from the League of Women Voters estimated the cost of a convention to taxpayers would be between \$50 and \$108 million. NYSUT organizer Michael Grubiak focused on the risks: "We could lose rights to free and equitable public education, as well as pension benefits for teachers." While a spokesman for the NYS Bar Association asserted that a convention could address such basic needs as judicial reform, better voting laws, and ethics reform, Grubiak called that position "a myth." "History tells us," he said, "that the majority of convention delegates will be elected officials and their appointees," who collect double salaries during a convention.

Earlier, NYSUT President Andrew Palotta stated: "A Constitutional Convention would have nothing to do with improving New York State government and returning it to 'the people.' ... 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."

Join WCCFT and NYSUT to oppose the constitutional convention.

On November 7, turn the ballot over and vote NO ON PROPOSAL 1.

For more information, visit www.nysut.org/concon.

UPCOMING EVENTS

MEMBERSHIP MEETINGS TEC 107

Nov. 1 & Dec. 6

EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETINGS

Nov. 15 & 29

NYSUT C.C. CONFERENCE

Oct. 27-29, Saratoga Springs, NY

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 richardwccft@gmail.com.

2017-2018

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