FROM YOUR PRESIDENT:
After listening to, and then reading Governor Cuomo’s State of the State, one should be concerned about the future and quality of public education in New York State. But when one reads the current information regarding the quality of education in our state it becomes clear that the vast majority of our NYS public schools are doing an outstanding job of educating children. Each year a majority of our students graduate high school and go into the work force or on to some form of higher education. Generally when students struggle to, or do not, complete their education, it is directly correlated to poverty and/or societal problems that negatively affect teaching and learning.

The governor used his State of the State and Budget presentations to attack New York’s teachers. The governor proposed severe, punishing and unproven changes in teacher evaluations and discipline that could gut tenure. He suggested increasing high-stakes tests, which parents and educators have repeatedly voiced their disapproval of and their desire to reduce in number. He proposed reducing a teacher’s right to collective bargaining in cases dealing with evaluations. His proposed back-door voucher scheme would provide tax credits to the wealthy supporters of charter and private schools, a plan that would siphon $100 million annually from the state’s already underfunded public schools. He wants the state to control failing schools, which would silence the voice of parents and eliminate collective bargaining agreements.

Under his reform plan, Mr. Cuomo is suggesting that 50 percent of a teacher’s assessment be based on student test scores instead of the current 20 percent that was negotiated with the state by NYSUT several years ago. This 50 percent is in direct contradiction to research and would only exacerbate test prep pressure and stress on students and teachers. Those teachers whose students can’t make the grade would be labeled “developing” or “ineffective.” His reasoning is that even though a large number of students are failing the new assessments, less than one percent of teachers are receiving ineffective evaluations. We all know there are many reasons students fail; it is not always the teacher who has failed the student. Under the Governor’s harmful proposals, new teachers would remain on probationary status until they receive five consecutive “effective” or “highly effective” ratings on their Annual Professional Performance Review (APPR). He has also proposed that the rating system be part of NYS law, again impacting the bargaining rights of teachers.

A recent Education Week report ranks New York’s schools 9th among the fifty states in the quality of its public schools despite the
From your President (cont.)

devastating inequality in school funding and the one million schoolchildren living in poverty in our state. Inequality in school funding has reached record levels in New York State with half of our school districts receiving less funding than they did in 2008. The proposed budget would provide only fifty percent of the increased funds needed for our schools.

The governor has no proposal to break the cycle of poverty and underfunding. He has not opened a discussion about how to use research proven programs to help children in poor communities. School districts statewide have been struggling for years with inadequate levels of state aid. Those struggles have been exacerbated by the fiscal constraints caused by passage of the state’s undemocratic tax cap. The tax cap erodes a community’s ability to provide what kids need to receive a good education. Making the tax cap permanent, which the governor is proposing to do, would prolong the financial hardships districts already face. The tax cap severely hampers a community’s ability to set its own educational priorities.

There needs to be discussions and resolutions regarding conditions that impact teaching and learning such as class size, involvement of parents, and ensuring quality early childhood education. We need to turn the focus away from testing and back to teaching and learning. Under the current state aid formula, students who need the most, often get the least. Cuomo wants New Yorkers to believe that public education is failing and teachers are failing, so teachers can be dismissed more easily, while creating more unaccountable charter schools, which siphon money from regular public schools and have no reliable track record of success. Parents, students and teachers know what is needed. It is not more standardized testing. It’s not more unaccountable charter schools or focus on a tiny number of struggling teachers. And, it’s not more high-stakes tests for students or punitive systems that misuse flawed data to inaccurately rate teachers.

You can make a difference. All you need to do is act on some of the following: Call your state senator and tell him or her to stand up to the Governor’s abusive way of treating teachers and the children they teach. Tell your senator to defend our outstanding New York schools.

• Get connected to the NYSUT Member Action Center (MAC) - Get real-time text messages about urgent news and actions by texting the word NYSUT to the number 38470.

• Subscribe to the NYSUT Member Action Center for email alerts. Go to http://mac.nysut.org/newsletter-sign-up. If you’re registered via email as a NYSUT MAC e-activist you’ll also be the first to know about upcoming rallies, protests and more.

• Download the NYSUT MAC App for your iPhone or for your Android phone. Be sure notifications are enabled to receive alerts on new action items.

• Get connected on Facebook. "Like" the Facebook pages for the NYSUT Member Action Center http://www.facebook.com/nysutactioncenter and NYSUT United http://www.facebook.com/nysutunited, share posts and join the conversation.

• Get connected on Twitter. Join Twitter at http://support.twitter.com/articles/100990-signing-up-with-twitter and follow @NYSUT http://www.twitter.com/nysut to be part of the social media army. Once a day (or as often as possible) tweet your thoughts on what #AllKidsNeed - more science labs, music and art classes, school libraries, smaller class sizes and more. NYSUT is reminding the governor to focus on what matters! Follow the conversation in real-time for some great examples from parents and educators.

• Talk it up to get the conversation going - online and offline. Read "Where We Stand" on www.nysut.org and use it to craft social media messages, send letters to the editor, and brief friends.

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Our Government Wheels Keep Turning – Meryl Sasnowitz, RSC

The mid-term elections are behind us, so we breathe a collective sigh of relief from the pains of political ad bombardment. The wheels of government keep on turning, however, and it’s crucial for us to share our concerns on issues.

There’s a simple way to locate your elected officials’ contact information. Start with the NYSUT website, nysut.org Scroll down the home page to the Resources list at the bottom. Double click Legislation Action Center and then double click Who are My Elected Officials? After you enter your zip code + 4, you’ll be given a list of names and contact information for your local and state elected officials. Don’t know your +4, there’s a help tool to get it for you. Make your voice heard !!!
Dear Retiree Council 45 members:

As you all probably know, NYSUT is a major voice for education in New York State. Our unified Union continues to represent your interests and concerns on all issues that are important to retirees. These concerns cover our pensions, Social Security, Medicare, health insurance and drug costs, elder care, travel, continuing education, and legislative programs that affect every one of us especially as we approach the 2015 New York State Budget battle.

If we are going to be a strong voice in Albany and New York State for retirees, it is necessary for us to ask you for a voluntary contribution to help fund our efforts to keep you informed and represented adequately so that retirees’ benefits are not compromised or diminished. The money collected will be used to: 1) fund our elected delegates and alternate delegates to the NYSUT Representative Assembly (May 1-2, Buffalo NY); 2) send representatives to NYSUT sponsored meetings geared to Retiree issues; 3) fund the cost of speakers at our semi-annual meetings; and 4) partially fund membership meeting costs; 5) fund other appropriate activities as voted upon by the Retiree Council 45 Board of Directors.

Therefore, please consider becoming a contributor to our continuing effort to represent you and your concerns. A $10.00 (or more) voluntary contribution to NYSUT Retiree Council 45 will help us with these endeavors. The officers of RC 45 appreciate your support.

Thank you in advance for joining us in our effort to advance Retiree issues.

Yours in Unity,
Bill Ninness
Retiree Council 45 President

Please complete the form below and send your voluntary contribution for 2015 to: Maxine Cleveland, RC 45 Treasurer, 5 Brentwood Drive, Homer NY 13077 OR hand this form in when you attend the RC 45 Spring Luncheon Meeting on Thursday, June 25.

Please make checks payable to: NYSUT Retiree Council 45

Name: ____________________________
Address: __________________________
District You Retired From: ________________
E-Mail: ____________________________

(Your e-mail address will only be used to communicate information from RC 45)

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**NYSUT and RC 45 invite you to their Upcoming Event**

**Tuesday, June 2nd, 2015** is the date of the upcoming NYSUT Regional Conference for RC 11 and RC 45. Some exciting workshops will be offered including: Binghamton Press columnist Valerie Zehl showing how to write our life’s story; a session on Zumba Gold to work out our kinks; our always enlightening NYSUT Member Benefits guru Diana Lindsay; and a workshop by Madeline Connolly, Director of NYSUT’s IT Department, to answer all those Social Media questions we have such as, “What’s a tweet and how do I get one?”

Tinelli’s Hathaway House in Solon, exit 10 off I-81, is the venue for the conference. Its chef, who was number one in her Cordon Bleu graduating class, won’t disappoint you.

Look for your invitation in a separate mailer as we get closer to spring.

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**JUNE 25, 2015** - Enjoy a day at the Northeast Classic Car Museum in Norwich with other RC 45 retirees. After a morning Membership Meeting, you’ll learn the museum’s history and have time to explore the center on your own. Have a lunch of mixed wraps, chips, and dessert, and then experience small group guided tours.

*Bring your camera and your friends along!*