



## Member Briefing

### NYSUT Member Briefing for Dec. 2

#### Action items:

- [Go to the MAC next week](#) to send letters urging a no vote on DeVos.
- [Give to VOTE-COPE!](#)

#### Karen's notes: Out of the frying pan and into the inferno

The final Every Student Succeeds Act regulations look a lot like the draft regs U.S. Education Secretary John King -- yeah, that guy -- promulgated earlier this year. When the White House and Congress came up with the ESSA law, which was carried with bipartisan support, we were excited by the opportunity to leave behind the destructive test-and-punish tenets of the old No Child Left Behind era.



But led by King, who had a disastrous tenure as New York State's education chief, the federal DOE drafted regulations that are a misinterpretation of the intent of the law. They are almost a step back.

The law's intent was to promote fair funding, curb high-stakes testing and return more power to the states. But the secretary has always had trouble following legislative intent as he implemented regulations. We saw it here in New York, and we are seeing it again now, as the secretary proposes punitive measures for school districts that do not submit at least 95 percent of their students to the onerous testing process. Far from curbing high-stakes testing, the secretary's interpretation is to double down on this failed policy.

These regs will not do anything to stem the opt-out movement. As you know, NYSUT firmly supports parents' rights to decide whether their children are subjected to the state tests, and we will continue to do so.

Of course, the irony is, King won't be in his job for long. President-elect Trump has nominated billionaire [anti-public school activist Betsy DeVos](#) to be his secretary of education. This is taking us from the frying pan into the inferno. The inexperienced DeVos would defund and dismantle public education by pushing charter schools -- a failed experiment in her home state of Michigan -- and private school vouchers, which undermine public schools that serve all kids.

For more on NYSUT's significant concerns, listen to [my conversation](#) with statewide radio host Susan Arbetter.

In this time of massive change at the national level, we must continue to communicate on the issues as we defend public education and call out those who attack it. Our progress statewide shows us the way forward.



NYSUT's Catalina Fortino addresses the hundreds of educators at this week's ELL conference in Albany.

## 1. English language learner conference draws big crowd

More than 550 educators (photo above) attended an [English language learner conference](#) this week co-sponsored by NYSUT.

## 2. SED seeking comments on revised school counselor regs

The State Education Department will hold a [second public comment period](#) from Nov. 30 to Dec. 30 on newly revised proposed amendments to school counselor regulations. SED's September 2015 proposal received approximately 1,000 public comments, including NYSUT's, that reflected significant concerns about providing services and certification.



At NYSUT's request, SED held meetings with stakeholders in May and September. NYSUT will be offering further comments as the process moves forward, including the need for a reasonable maximum student/counselor ratio. Following the 30-day comment period, the Regents are expected to adopt the regulations at the February 2017 meeting.

## 3. NYSUT updates fact sheet on teacher certification exam safety nets

Due to concerns over the rushed implementation of the new certification exams, the Regents have approved a series of safety nets for prospective teachers. NYSUT has [updated its teacher certification fact sheet](#) to reflect the changes.

## 4. Grade 3-8 state tests regional item writing workshops

In order to give more teachers an opportunity to participate in the development of items for the state grade 3-8 tests, the test vendor is holding regional workshops in January and February. [Here are more details](#). Send your name, grade, subject, school district, session and contact information to Terry McSweeney at [tmcsweeney@nysutmail.org](mailto:tmcsweeney@nysutmail.org).

## 5. Union's legal strategy unchanged as NYSHIP legislation is vetoed

NYSUT will continue its court case to protect the collective bargaining rights of public employees with respect to negotiated health insurance buyouts. Citing our pending legal case, the governor this week vetoed the NYSHIP health care buyout bill that NYSUT had helped pass both houses of the Legislature last spring.

## 6. Women's March on Washington

NYSUT has compiled links to information on the [grassroots-organized Women's March](#) on Washington, D.C., for members interested in knowing more about this evolving event, including information on multiple transportation options to D.C.



The march, which is being publicized via Facebook, is a work in progress; organizers say they are seeking, but have not yet received, permits to hold the event. The march is planned to start at 10 a.m. on Jan. 21, the day after the presidential inauguration. Organizers say the purpose of the peaceful march, open to all, is to make the point that "women's rights are human rights" and to stand against derogatory anti-women, anti-minority rhetoric.

## 7. Save the date: NYSUT plans Women's Conference March 3-4

The work of the NYSUT Women's Steering Committee, which has spanned the past two years, is poised to take an important step forward with a conference scheduled for March 3-4, 2017. The conference is expected to address issues important to NYSUT members, including (but not limited to) domestic violence, retirement security, communications, political engagement, and other subjects deemed critical by attendees. Invitations will be extended shortly to all NYSUT members, and with attendance limited to 150 people for this inaugural conference, slots are expected to fill quickly. Please watch this space for further information, and for registration details.



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