



sta note

Calculating Your Retirement Benefit

Only you can decide when retirement is right for you. However there are some tools available for you.

Go to the TRS (Units 1 & 8) web page at <http://www.nystrs.org> or the ERS (Units 7 & 10) <http://osc.state.ny.us/retire/>. Both sites have a variety of tools and materials to help you better understand retirement. Please feel free to contact either office with individual questions.

STAY INFORMED!

News and events are changing rapidly. For updates and alerts check syracuseteachers.org or nysut.org regularly or visit our Facebook at www.facebook.com/SyracuseTeachersAssociation



STA's Response to SCSD Budget

By: Kevin Ahern
President

The superintendent has proposed a 2011-2011 budget (available on the STA website) that includes the elimination of 165 teacher and 156 teaching assistant positions. There are also 90 unnamed positions in the proposal resulting from the governor's proposed budget that leaves the SCSD with an additional \$16 million shortfall. The school board is scheduled to vote on the budget at their next meeting in March.

Many of the details of this devastating proposal are still unclear. There is no position-by-position breakdown yet and the impact, if any, to Unit 7 is unknown. We anticipate a fuller picture in March when the board's budget is announced. Suffice it to say, however, the magnitude of these cuts is staggering. Some of the issues we have been asked about are:

WAGE FREEZE: The superintendent has requested a one-year wage freeze from all bargaining units. This should come as no surprise to anybody since he's been talking about it since September. The STA's response has been consistent: We are willing to have the discussion with the SCSD about potential contract conces-

sions. If that discussion leads to a proposal that makes sense, we will take it to our membership for a vote. We will not, however, negotiate in public or ask our members to make a last minute decision.

SAY YES: Say Yes to Education will cost the district about \$13 million next year. We have been assured that most of that money comes from title grants outside of the general operating, or "A" budget. We have asked the district and Say Yes for a detailed breakdown of the funding and are waiting for their response.

SENIORITY: Despite rumors to the contrary, the district must follow the seniority regulations under New York State Education and/or Civil Service law when reducing its force. We are waiting for accurate seniority lists from Personnel (a request made in October) and will let you know as soon as we receive them.

RETIREMENT "INCENTIVE": The SCSD Board of Education passed a \$10,000 retirement incentive for most bargaining units, including STA Units 1, 7, 8 and 10. The notification deadline is March 9, 2011. The incentive is based on a specific number of people signing up in each unit. Download

the form on the STA website.

UNRESTRICTED LEAVE: The district is once again offering an unrestricted unpaid leave option for Units 1 and 8. The application deadline is February 28, 2011. Download the announcement on the STA website.

Throughout this budget process, the STA will continue to communicate with you as more information becomes available.

What You Can Do

Use your pen and keyboard. Send letters and e-mails on the proposed budget, the tax cap and more to lawmakers via the Take Action! link on www.nysut.org.

Tell your story. NYSUT has launched an identity campaign – "It's what we do" – featuring radio ads and a website devoted to members and the value of their work. Listen to the ads at www.nysut.org and encourage others to do the same. Share your story with your family, friends and neighbors.

Support grassroots coalitions. NYSUT locals across the state are working with parent groups such as the Alliance for Quality Education and Citizen Action. Show solidarity at rallies in your area.

Give to VOTE-COPE. The union's voluntary political action fund helps with local campaigns and lawmakers who support our issues. Contact Nancy Juliano x4526.

Be visible. Attend a SCSD Board of Education and/or PTA meeting. Make it clear that union members are taxpayers, too, and care about the state of their communities.



SCSD Offers a Retirement Incentive

The SCSD is offering a retirement incentive to its employees (except Unit 5 members) under the following conditions:

- Employee must be a member of Bargaining Unit 1, 2, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, or 11 and must be eligible to retire
- Effective date of retirement must be June 30, 2011
- All other contractual terms and conditions of retirement apply, including contractual stipend sick leave payment, health benefits, etc.

Retirement incentive can only be rescinded if the targeted number of retirement commitments is not reached.

- Member must complete and SIGN the form entitled "2011 Retirement Incentive" available on the STA website.
- Completed form must be sent by certified mail, return receipt requested, or hand delivered to the Office of the Director of Personnel (Room 111) No later than 4:30 PM on Monday, March 7, 2011.

STA BUDGET GROUP MEETING
MARCH 3, 2011
3:30 PM at STA
Call x4526
for more information

Public Employee Pensions & Salaries

As all of you know, there is a lot of criticism and blame for the economic crisis being placed on public employee wages and benefits. I hope you also know that none of it is really true. The blame for our current economic woes is the subprime mortgage debacle that nearly destroyed our economy. Unfortunately for us, our critics, legislators and the public in general haven't let that fact (or any other, for that matter) get in the way of targeting our contracts and pensions. With that in mind, below are some of those facts (Yes, actual facts!) that belie the myths.

Myth #1: Public employee pensions are too rich, a burden on the taxpayers and the reason your city and/or school district is going broke.

- While employer contribution rates have risen in the past few years due to declines in the market, rates have held in the single digits for the last 22 consecutive years with the fifteen year average rate of 4.31%
- For a three-year span beginning in 2000, employers paying into the NYSTRS were contributing less than 0.5% of payroll to the fund.
- 86% of the pension plan income comes from successful investment returns. 14% comes from employer and employee contributions to the plan.
- During a 20 year period, NYSTRS took in \$14.4 billion in member and employer contributions and paid out \$58.9 billion in earned benefits – all while net assets more than doubled.
- The average retiree benefit of a NYSTRS retiree is around \$39,000
- The average retiree benefit of NYSLERS retiree is around \$18,000

Myth #2: Public employee make more than private sector employees and are therefore the reason for this economic crisis.

- Private-sector workers earned average annual wages of \$55,132, \$6,061 greater than the \$49,072 earned by public-sector workers.
- When looking at total compensation including employer-provided benefits, this gap narrowed but the private-sector workers still earned \$2,001 more per year than public sector workers (\$71,109 in total compensation, versus \$69,108). This gap was especially large among more educated workers. College-educated public sector workers on average earn \$22,966 less in total compensation.
- On average, state and local public-sector workers are more highly educated than the private-sector workforce; 54% of full-time state and local public sector workers hold at least a four year college degree compared to 35% of full-time private-sector workers. State and local governments pay college-educated labor on average 25% less than private employers.
- On average, full-time state and local employees are undercompensated by 3.7%, in comparison to otherwise similar private-sector workers.
- Source: Debunking the Myth of the Overcompensated Public, Jeffrey Keefe, Economic Policy Institute – Briefing Paper # 276

Expanding Horizon Grant Money Available

Target your classroom needs with an Expanding Horizons Grants proposal

Prepare an in-school field trip experience

Plan a guest and earn an "in kind" grant for your needs while you stay in you building. No SCSD field trip packet required for guest presenters invited to your school. Check STA website...Committee members can be contacted through STA at 472-6374.

