

Vocational Instructor

Local 4200A ~ AFT, AFTCT, & AFL-CIO

Volume MMXII Issue 2

"It Pays
To Be Taught
By a Vo-Tech
Teacher"

MARCH 2012

Tenure – Do We Need It?

By Jan Hochadel, SVFT President

Recently, Governor Malloy said, "Today tenure is too easy to get and too hard to take away," and called for reform of the tenure process. "We have been timid where we should have been bold. The time to reform tenure is now... Tenure must be earned, and re-earned." Teachers' unions, including CEA and AFT have joined the call for tenure reform, believing that if change is inevitable, unions should play a large part.

Anyone who survived their first four years of teaching knows that tenure is not easy to get, and it is not too hard to take away. In our contract, teachers in their first two years of teaching can be released without cause at any time. In years three and four, the only protection from the contract is timelines and the benefit of an appeal to the Superintendent. This does not seem too easy... Is it too hard to take away? In a recent AFT-CT Legislative breakfast, Senator Don Williams said, "Even Superintendents don't agree with the idea you can't get rid of bad teachers."

So as I sit at the Legislative Office Building, waiting to give testimony on the Governor's Education Bill, I wonder why so many want to get rid of tenure. The word itself has become a scapegoat for everything wrong with education. Recent front-page stories in the New York Post showcasing one teacher who has been on administrative leave for over a decade, earning over \$1 million, are designed to outrage parents and taxpayers. The details that show administrators who have failed to document incompetence and misconduct, and put him on administrative leave rather than fulfill their responsibilities, are too complicated for the bold headlines. I also worry about the protection for a teacher on top step who is willing to stand up to administration to demand what is right for the students, and not willing to accept what is easiest for the system. Without tenure, what protects that teacher's job?

"Tenure" has become a term that covers three separate issues: evaluations, due process, and contract language. Currently, when a teacher hits a set date – for us, four full-time years – the teacher becomes tenured. What does tenure mean? What protections that are denied on one day are provided the next?

In the CTHSS, once a teacher is tenured they are placed in the Professional Phase of ESS. Is there a difference

from the previous year? Other than three mandatory observations, not really. The new Teacher Evaluation Framework will be changing the way teachers are required to demonstrate teaching and learning in the classroom. It is entirely possible that once beginning teachers complete TEAM, all teachers will be evaluated the same way. Will the word tenure be applicable? Probably not. An ESS that better measures teacher performance, and that has clearly defined rubrics for effective teaching, will provide more protection from administrators singling out teachers for personal reasons than tenure does today.

The expansion of due process is also important. Currently, teachers in years three and four do not have the right to go to arbitration on a dismissal for any reason; they only can get a hearing with the Superintendent. Due process requires the system – administrators and Central Office – to explain and defend its decision to discipline or terminate a teacher. While some people complain that arbitration can be too costly and slow, it should be difficult to take a person's livelihood away. People should not lose their jobs for arbitrary and capricious reasons. Administrators who document incompetence and misconduct, who attempt to improve instruction and provide support, are now able to take action against teachers who fail to perform. If due process is extended to more members, as the Governor's proposal would do, the change in tenure should benefit our membership, not harm it.

There are still real issues to be addressed, however. Any new ESS proposal would require extensive training, not just for teachers but especially for the administrators who will implement it. Can we be guaranteed enough training will be provided so that the system will be implemented consistently and fairly from school to school, administrator to administrator? A look at how our current plan is used gives reason for concern. Will teachers receive true due process? Our contract states "the arbitrator shall not substitute his/her judgment unless the Union can show that management acted arbitrarily and capriciously." Will the system be willing to extend that language to include "against the best interests of the students" or other similar terms? Taking away someone's job is a big step, and should require real proof. Tenure as a term may have become too controversial to maintain. Teachers cannot educate effectively, however, unless they are certain that their efforts will be protected, not punished.

Meet Our New Vice President

As all of you undoubtedly know, we have a new SVFT Vice-President, Greg Beyer. Most recently, Greg served as the Library Media Specialist at Oliver Wolcott Tech in Torrington. He also taught English and was a General Ed. Dept. Head. In his new capacity as our vice president, Greg will be working on a variety of important items. In addition to the traditional tasks our VPs have always taken on, Greg will be adding some new ones. At the top of the list will be our new website. "I am really excited about the roll-out of our new and upgraded website," Greg said recently. "This spring, we will be joining the AFT network of websites that offers free hosting and easy-to-use site development tools that will give our home on the web a new look and lots more features and content. There will be news from our state and national affiliates as well as our own local information updates, all available in one spot that will be a breeze to navigate." Greg noted that another important benefit of the new site will be that the union's full-time officers will be able to update it with breaking news instantly from the office or anywhere in the field. Greg added, "I will also be meeting with AFT-Connecticut's communications experts and exploring other methods of updating our members through the use of social media and possibly text messaging. With our affiliates' assistance, we should be able to provide a new level of member communication."



**SVFT Vice-President
Greg Beyer**

Also on our new vice president's agenda is coordinating the important committee work of the SVFT. "Spring is a very busy time for our committees," Greg noted. "Teacher of the Year selection is about to get underway, and our new Union Trade Advisory Committee is off to a great start bringing attention to the unique concerns of our trade instructors. It's a really exciting time to be a full-time officer."

Greg added one last message that he would like to share with members: "I'm honored to have been elected as your new vice president. My pledge to you is that I will do whatever I can to support you as you do the important work of preparing Connecticut's next generation of tradesmen and tradeswomen. If you ever have questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to contact me at the union office."

UTAC Committee Begins

At the General Membership Meeting this past November, SVFT members voted to approve the formation of a Union Trade Advisory Committee. Trade teachers were invited by the SVFT to join the UTAC and look at trade-specific issues for the SVFT. The goal was a cross-section of trades and schools to be represented on the committee. Seventeen trade teachers have responded, representing 12 of 17 schools and 11 of the 30 trades. Anyone who feels his or her school or specific trade is not adequately represented should consider volunteering and attending the next meeting.

At the first meeting in December, the mission of the Committee was discussed. The SVFT is looking for trade-specific issues to be presented to the SVFT Labor-Management Committee and possibly to legislation. UTAC members then contributed opinions on a variety of topics. One of the benefits of the meeting was that the members present gained new insights into the challenges and successes of members in other trade areas. The December meeting included discussions on the inconsistent policy of production money distribution, apprenticeship ratio, remediation, expansion of adult education, student transport vehicles and eating on production,

OSHA issues including fall protection and ARC flash training records, and grant writing. Afterwards, many members spoke favorably of the usefulness of the meeting and of the professional cooperation evident. This was a productive working meeting – not a gripe session.

Subsequent meetings have also been productive. Discussions have centered on topics from how best to have the Educator Support System reflect the work trade teachers do to the possibility of having the CTHSS trades restore a building to be the next SVFT office. The committee will meet at least before every Labor-Management meeting (September, December, March, and June) and additionally if issues arise at Central Office or the Legislature. Meeting Minutes and additional information on this committee will soon be on the website (svft.org). Anyone interested in serving on the Union Trade Advisory Committee (UTAC) should contact Jan Hochadel at jhochadel@svft.org, Greg Beyer at gbeyer@svft.org, or Ed Leavy at eleavy@svft.org from a home email address. All committees are reassigned every two years. Membership in this committee will last until June 2013. Members may also share their trade-specific issues with any UTAC member for inclusion on the next meeting agenda.

The Whys and Wheres of the Walkout

By Ed Leavy, Executive Union Representative

We have been getting a great number of complaints and questions recently about teachers being “walked out.” People want to know why so many more people are getting walked out now than ever before, and ask how the principal has the right to just “suspend” our members before they ever have the chance to defend themselves. It is clear that there are a great number of misconceptions about the process that need to be addressed.

The principal is not responsible for putting a person on administrative leave; the Superintendent is. She consults with Human Resources and makes the decision whether or not to put the person on leave. That is not to say the principal plays no role; some principals are more likely to deal with teacher issues “in house” than are others, and those principals have fewer people on leave. While the number of our members who have been put on administrative leave varies widely from school to school, every school other than Bristol and Aero Tech has had at least one SVFT member placed on administrative leave in the past three years.

It is also not clear that more members are being put on administrative leave this year than in the past. Between October 1, 2011 and February 1, 2012 we have had exactly five hours in which no SVFT member was on administrative leave, which is a sobering fact. However, last year we had stretches when half-dozen teachers or more were on administrative leave at one time, and this year we have never had more than three at any given time. Since I was elected in 2008, I have not noticed a significant increase in the overall number of teachers on administrative leave.

Teachers are not given a chance to tell their side of the story before being put on administrative leave because that reverses the process. Administrative leave is not considered disciplinary; teachers receive their full pay, including stipends for ancillary positions while on leave. The purpose of administrative leave is to protect not only the students but also the teacher during the fact-finding process. If a student makes an accusation against a teacher, it would be difficult for the two of them to resume a normal teacher-student relationship while the fact-finding process goes on. Additionally, many of these cases have also had DCF referrals, and the State needs to ensure the integrity of that process by separating the teacher from the student. Obviously, the student cannot be removed in most cases – would you understand if your daughter was suspended because she said the teacher grabbed her arm?—so the teacher is placed on administrative

leave throughout the process. The teacher does get the chance to present his or her side of the story, both during a fact-finding meeting with the principal and HR, and during a Loudermill hearing if the State is planning to issue discipline. Of course, the teacher has union representation in every step of the process, and remains on full salary the whole time.

The problem is, though Administrative Leave is not considered discipline, it sure feels like discipline. The person wants to go to work, and cannot. He or she sits at home, imagines all the work piling up on the desk, worries, and waits. And waits. If DCF is involved, that agency has 45 days from first notification to issue a report. They don’t always take the full 45 days, but they usually come pretty close. The State cuts off access to work email and PowerSchool. The person on leave is not allowed to contact anyone else in the system. The only one in the system the person can talk to is me (I know; that is punishment). When the person returns – and overwhelmingly people do return – he or she faces the awkwardness of dealing with students and colleagues who wonder what happens, and figure the person must have done something wrong. That is not always the case; teachers have come back fully exonerated, and received no discipline at all. Still, the return is uncomfortable, and teachers can be anxious or bitter when they get back. I have dealt with dozens of people on administrative leave over the past three years, and I know that while administrative leave may not be discipline, it’s hell.

There are things the system can and should do to address administrative leave. The emotional impact on the teacher and the educational impact on the students should be carefully weighed against the concerns about any investigation. More importantly, we have noticed an increase in the number of students in some schools who openly talk about “getting teachers” and having them walked out. We have had cases in which teachers have reported specific students to their administration for bragging that they can get a teacher “in big trouble”; the administration didn’t bother to talk to either the students or their parents. That is simply wrong. The SVFT continues to call on Central Office to develop a strict policy on students who can be shown to have made false statements against a teacher, so that there are clear implications when a student tries to “get” someone. In many cases, administrative leave is a difficult but appropriate step in the investigative process. However, the system has the moral and educational responsibility to everyone involved to ensure that it is not used as a weapon. To date, that has not happened.

SVFT Internship Begins

By Amy Beyer

SVFT Intern Legislative Update



**SVFT Intern,
Amy Beyer**

The 2012 Legislative Session is already in full swing. With the emphasis on education this session there are many bills that impact SVFT. The first bill is the Governor's Bill (SB 24). This is the governor's plan for education reform in Connecticut including different tenure and certification options. There is a section of the Governor's Bill dedicated to the Connecticut Technical High School System (CTHSS). The Governor has recognized the need for a separate board of education for CTHSS. This is an important step to ensure that the value of technical high schools is understood in Connecticut. The Governor's plan for the makeup of the board is not ideal, though. On Tuesday, February 21, 2012 SVFT President Jan Hochadel testified in front of the education committee about revising the plan for the CTHSS board to include a parent, TTAC members, and a community college representative. The proposal calls for local chambers of commerce to appoint members but the TTAC members would be a much better fit for the board since they understand CTHSS. Hopefully the education committee will make these changes and CTHSS will have its own board of education that understands the needs of the system.

Another bill that could have an impact on CTHSS is Senate Bill 170. This bill would allow businesses that donate equipment to tech schools to receive a tax credit. Hopefully this increased incentive will encourage businesses to make donations to the tech schools. Senate Bill 169 would provide businesses with double the tax credits for training apprentices in manufacturing and construction. This bill hopes to increase the number of apprentices Connecticut businesses are willing to train.

These are just a few of the bills that will have an impact on SVFT and CTHSS this legislative session. An ethics bill has been raised to allow state employees to spend more than \$100 on services provided by tech students. This bill has not been published yet but hopefully it will be in the next few weeks. All of the bills mentioned above, along with others, will be monitored as the session continues. Hopefully this education session will bring good things for SVFT and CTHSS.

Teacher of the Year Selection Begins Soon

Later this month, the SVFT will begin the process of selecting this year's Teachers of the Year for each building and, ultimately, our system. Nominations will be accepted in mid-March and the new TOYs will be elected just prior to April vacation. All of the winners will be honored at the SVFT Teacher of the Year reception and dinner in May. The process will culminate with the naming of the CTHSS Teacher of the Year later in the spring. All building reps were given the selection guidelines at the March Executive Council meeting. We look forward to recognizing excellent teachers from all around our system. If you have any questions about the TOY process, please contact Greg Beyer at the union office.

Letters to the Editor Policy

Letters to the Editor must be limited to 200 words or less; Counterpoint essays must be 400 words or less.

You must provide your real name, school where you teach, and a daytime phone number.

All letters are subject to editing. We will not publish unsigned letters, and only one letter is allowed per writer every 30 days.



Trade Reauthorizations

The State Board of Education in accordance with state statutes must evaluate each trade program in the CTHSS and consider reauthorization for a period not to exceed five years. The ability of each program to attract students and the ability of graduates to find an ample number of employment opportunities in the specific trade are two important factors considered in the reauthorization process. In the past, it was not uncommon that trades with declining student enrollment and a projected decrease in employment opportunities and shops that were just beginning were authorized for only two years.

On February 15th, the Connecticut State Board of Education Technical High School Committee voted to request that the State Board reauthorize the following programs for five years (from January 2012 to January 2017)

- Culinary
- Baking
- Tourism, Hospitality, and Guest Services Management
- Fashion Merchandising and Entrepreneurship
- Hairdressing/Barbering
- Marketing, Management, and Entrepreneurship

Labor Union History: Looking Past Differences

The basic tenet of unionism is that we are strongest when we stand together. Unfortunately, people often tend to use differences as a reason to break into factions, and unions are not immune to this tendency. Throughout labor history, the rights of workers have suffered when union leadership and union members have focused on the differences between them rather than the issues that unite them. Not surprisingly, the issue that has divided the American labor movement most often has been race.

From the early stages of the labor movement, some union leaders have understood that the needs of all workers must transcend race. In the 1880s, AFL leader Samuel Gompers told his membership, "As working men we are not justified in refusing [African-Americans] the right of the opportunity to organize for their common protection... If organizations do, we will only make enemies of them, and of necessity they will be antagonistic to our interests." In the first AFL convention, held in 1886, four black workers' groups sent representatives. The convention adopted a resolution stating that the AFL would "never discriminate against a fellow worker on account of color, creed, or nationality."

This idea paid dividends in an 1892 general strike in New Orleans. Streetcar drivers went on strike to demand a 12-hour day; they had been working 16-hour shifts. The rest of the AFL locals, black and white, went out on strike in support of the streetcar drivers. Though the individual locals were not integrated, the strike became integrated as each unit demanded a 10-hour day, overtime wages, and exclusive union bargaining rights. The strike was overseen by the newly-formed Workingmen's Amalgamated Council, which had representation from both races.

The strike was not completely successful. Louisiana governor Murphy J. Foster threatened to bring in the militia, and the strikers returned to work. The Board of Trade, which had tried to break the strike with virulent race-baiting, refused to recognize the union as the exclusive bargaining agent of the workers. But the unions did prevail on the hours and overtime issues. Gompers called the strike "a very bright ray of hope for the future of organized labor."

Unfortunately, that hope soon dimmed because white workers refused to work with their African-American brethren, and union leaders shied away from confronting the problem of racism directly. Samuel Gompers tried to strengthen the commitment of Southern unions to the AFL by retreating from the AFL's earlier declarations, and stated, "We cannot overcome racism in a day." The exclusion of African-Americans from the labor movement meant there was always a pool of non-union workers able to take jobs that union workers had once held. Racial antagonism only intensified, and the fractures became increasingly difficult to mend.

The problems of racism still exist today, in both the labor movement and the nation at large, but in far more muted tones. The lessons from the success of the 1892 strike and its unfortunate aftermath are still important today. We are strongest when we work past our differences to reach common goals. We are weakest when we ignore our values, our principles, and our common humanity, for practical reasons. When we do so, we lose, and deserve to lose.

Most of the information for this article is from There is Power in a Union by Philip Dray

Reminder: Scholarship and Professional Development Grants Available

The SVFT Scholarship Program has been revised and is now seeking applications. A total of nine \$1,000 scholarships are available for students, and mini-grants for professional development are available for members.

To be eligible for a \$1,000 scholarship, a student must be the son or daughter of an SVFT member and must be a high school senior who will be continuing his/her academic or vocational education in 2012-2013.

Applications may be downloaded from the union website www.svft.org or requested by contacting the union office. The application lists the additional required documentation. Completed applications must arrive at the SVFT office before May 15, 2012. The SVFT Scholarship Committee will announce the names of the scholarship recipients on or before June 1, 2012.

Members may apply for an SVFT mini-grant by submitting a typed letter (not more than 250 words) with your name, school where you teach, and explaining how the money will be used. Mini-grants not totaling more than \$1,000 will be awarded. Letters of Application must arrive at the SVFT office before May 15, 2012 and announcement of those receiving mini-grants will be made on or before June 1st.

Anyone with questions about the SVFT Scholarship Program should contact Vice-President Greg Beyer at the union office.

SAFETY FIRST, SAFETY ALWAYS

part 3

By Cory Rogers, Electrical DH



Darryl Alexander and Mike Lohman from AFT Washington make a presentation to the OSHA Health & Safety Committee

In a concerted effort to protect members' right to a safe and healthful workplace, the SVFT leadership has made Conn-OSHA compliance a focal point for 2012. On January 17, a new joint OSHA Health and Safety committee was formed. This committee is designed to go over health and safety recommendations from AFT-National, SVFT members, and Central Office. The committee's focus is to work with each building's health and safety teams to address workplace safety

problems, to provide timely training, and to document environmental testing.

The meeting was led by safety officers from AFT-National out of Washington, D.C. SVFT members from almost every building were able to provide input regarding health and safety concerns and/or possible violations. Because of the uniqueness of our system, the areas of expertise ranged from various trades, science and math instructors, and support members. Central Office Consultant John Woodmansee is also a member of this new group.

AFT-National was able to secure a grant to provide training for all of our members. With this grant, SVFT members will continue to be trained in workplace safety. The grant will also be used to identify classes or trade departments in the direst need of attention and to secure the funding needed to correct health and safety problems. We hope to have all OSHA-related problems addressed by September 2012.

This is a great turn of events for our union and system. Many SVFT members are now authorized to conduct OSHA training or first aid/CPR certification classes. There are more "train the trainer" sessions on the horizon. A point of interest: all members, whether trade or academic or support have the opportunity to sign up for the next battery of classes this summer. Feel free to contact your building rep, or any officer, for details on how to sign up! We need you!

Thanks to the continuing efforts of your union, there is no doubt that SVFT members are the best trained, most qualified high school educators in Connecticut. Spread the word!

Proposed Annual Budget



Budget Committee members Pat Ripley and Joe Scarduzio discuss the proposed annual budget

SVFT Vice-President and current Treasurer, Greg Beyer has finished preparing the proposed annual budget for 2012-2013. The process began this month with the accumulation of necessary information, contracts, and patterns of spending. Budget preparation is an arduous task and is reviewed by several people to check all the details and computations. The proposed budget was presented and accepted at the Budget Committee Meeting on February 22nd. At the March 2nd Executive Committee Meeting and the March 14th Executive Council Meeting, the proposed budget will again be reviewed for approval. Building Representatives are encouraged to share the proposed budget with all members in their building. If a member would like to make any adjustments, they should contact their Building Representative to bring forth the suggestion at the next council meeting scheduled for Wednesday, April 4th.

The proposed 2012-2013 budget will then be brought before membership for review and approval on Wednesday, May 17th at the General Membership Meeting, scheduled for 6:30 PM at Wilcox THS in Meriden.

The time-line and the approval process for the Annual Budget are outlined in our Constitution and By-Laws and must be strictly followed.

Governor Visits Windham THS

To promote his jobs program, with its emphasis on manufacturing, and his announcement that the 2012 Legislative session was going to be dedicated to education, Governor Dannel Malloy and Lieutenant Governor Nancy Wyman visited Windham THS on February 10. The visit consisted of a brief press conference and a visit to the Electrical, Manufacturing, and Carpentry shops.

Governor Malloy spent time speaking to students in Manufacturing Technologies. The department head, Jim Cardin, talked to the Governor and Lieutenant Governor about how he ran the program and the struggles he encountered. The Governor acknowledged that much of the equipment in the shop was old and needed to be replaced. Jim stated



that the Governor was far more conversational than Senator Richard Blumenthal had been during his visit a month earlier; Jim laughed at the idea that he was now in a position to make those comparisons. "I think it was important that the Governor see a successful program, even with the equipment in need of replacement." Jim said. "I'm glad he came in."



Carpentry was another stop on the Governor's visit. The Governor spoke mostly to the students, asking them about the projects they were working on. He seemed interested when the instructor, Brian Bisson, told him he was a Windham THS graduate himself, and that he turned to teaching after several years in the industry. Brian said he was hoping to talk about what could be done from the State level to improve the teaching and learning experience in the CTHSS, but there was no opportunity to do so.

Given where the CTHSS was with the Governor last year – HB6385, the budget proposal to close the system – it was a welcome sight to have him in our schools. The more people know about our system, the more they value it. We believe Governor Malloy will be no exception.



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MARCH 2012

Vocational Instructor
is the monthly newsletter of the
State Vocational Federation of
Teachers

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Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
2/27 Health & Safety Prince THS	2/28 TOY Meeting @ 4:00pm SVFT Office	2/29 Vinal School Visit	3/1 OSHA Meeting @ 4:00pm SVFT Office	3/2 9:00am SVFT Executive Committee Meeting
3/5	3/6 Wilcox School Visit	3/7 SEBAC @ 9:00 CT State Board of Education Meeting 10:00am @ LOB	3/8 AFT-CT Executive Committee Meeting 5:00pm	3/9
3/12	3/13 Abbott School Visit	3/14 Labor Management at CO at 9:00am SVFT Council Meet- ing @ 5:00 pm	3/15	3/16
3/19 Platt School Visit Health & Safety Vinal THS	3/20 Grasso School Visit	3/21 CT Committee Meeting 10:00am	3/22 Prince School Visit AFT-CT Executive Council Meeting 5:00pm	3/23
3/26 CT AFL-CIO Legislative Conference, Hartford	3/27 Norwich School Visit	3/28 PRC Meeting 4:00pm-4:30pm	3/29 9:00am SVFT Executive Committee Meeting	3/30 NO SCHOOL Skills USA
4/2	4/3 Goodwin School Visit	4/4 CT State Board of Education Meeting 10:00am @ LOB SVFT Council Meeting @ 5:00 pm	4/5 Bullard-Havens School Visit	4/6 NO SCHOOL Good Friday

Letter to the Editor Response to “Principle Must be First”

My name is Charlie Rayner and I am a coach and recently retired teacher who is now a “former” SVFT union member of 33 years. I am the coach who was hired this fall to coach soccer at Windham Tech after 33 years of coaching the soccer program during my teaching career. Ed Leavy wrote an article in the December SVFT union newsletter addressing the question of whether former union members who are retired teachers should be allowed to coach in the CTHSS. In that article he begins by incorrectly reporting that I happily negotiated a lower salary for a coaching position this fall. He contends retirees should not coach because they are not represented by the union. He also holds out the proposition that retirees should not be given preference over outside applicants for coaching positions. Mr. Leavy concludes his article with a request for input from the membership on this final issue. I am writing to add to this conversation, correct several inaccuracies and point out some problems with some of Mr. Leavy’s arguments in the in order to frame a principled approach to this issue that serves the best interest of our students.

Mr. Leavy stated in the beginning of his article that “the retiree (that’s me) negotiated a position in the contract for a stipend less than that identified in the contract”. I hardly consider what happened between me and the state a negotiation. I applied for the position and was denied by the SDE because I was a retiree. After enlisting the help of several state legislators, I was awarded the position and told by my principal that I got the job but the SDE said I “might” only get 75% of the stipend indicated in the contract. Mr. Leavy reported in his article that I “was happy with that arrangement.” I’m not sure how he felt qualified to speak for me without having asked me about this first, but he did. If he had talked to me he would know that I was opposed to a 75% stipend and agree completely with his reasoning on this issue.

Mr. Leavy argues against my right to a coaching job in our system because the union no longer represents me. He states, “We represent our membership. The fact that these coaches still can do a good job is not the issue. Many of our current members are awaiting an opportunity to coach, and they would do a good job too.” Well in my case there was no member “awaiting the opportunity”. This position was posted twice and there were no qualified applicants. I should have every right to offer myself for that position. Finally, I agree with Mr. Leavy that “It is not clear that giving retirees preference for coaching positions over outside applicants is what our membership wants either.” I believe that this decision should be a question of principle. If we want the best for our kids, then the standard should be that the best, most qualified coach should be given preference, period. And if that person is a retired coach from our system then that is who should get the position. If not, then so be it. Isn’t that the real overriding principle we should use? In Mr. Leavy’s final paragraph, he refers to the “best interest of the CTHSS” when citing the Executive Committee’s majority belief that retirees should be allowed to substitute teach. I can only assume that he is referring to the benefit that retired teachers could bring to the classroom because of their experience and skills. I contend that the same argument can be made for coaches who have demonstrated the ability to enrich the CTHSS by a record of proven success.

The letter above was edited for space. The complete letter is available on our website. I will acknowledge that the use of the word “negotiate” was ill-advised; he did, however, accept the reduced salary. I did not speak to Mr. Rayner because I felt the issue was not about Mr. Rayner’s actions, but the State’s. Other than that, there are simply differences of opinions. – Ed.