



# Update

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## **From The Desk of Rosanne Mamo Dec. 4<sup>th</sup> – SCHSD Referendum Vote**

For the first time in Sewanhaka's history, a bond referendum will be presented to the public. Along with the continuing saga of a 2% tax cap and the three upcoming SFT contract negotiations, some are calling it a "perfect storm." There are strong feelings for and against this referendum; and many who don't fully understand its implications are unable to truly judge. Let me try to explain why I believe passing the referendum will have a positive impact for not only our schools, students and communities, but for us as a Union.

Our schools are old and, as such, have been, in many regards, neglected in their maintenance. We've all experienced garbage pails catching leaks after a storm, poor ventilation from pigeons nesting in vents, windows that are now opaque, uncomfortable heat in the auditoriums; and our coaches know all too well that most of our fields are unsafe and in disrepair. All of our schools need upgrades, and fitting these kinds of capital projects into a general school budget constrained by a tax cap is nearly impossible. The District has spent down the greater part of its reserves over the past several years while maintaining the buildings as best it could and preserving the majority of staff. Let me give you a few examples of how the passing of this referendum can help.

- H.F. Carey desperately needs a new roof. The cost of this new roof can be handled by one of two means. If the referendum is passed, the roof will be repaired through the use of bond funds. If the referendum fails, the roof will be repaired by taking money from next year's general school budget - precious monies better suited for staffing and programs.
- Auditoriums with upgraded ventilation and air conditioning units - paid for via the bond - could be rented out to our component elementary schools and other public groups for various events.
- Renovations to the heating and ventilation systems, as well as improvements to the security and technology infrastructure – again made possible by the referendum's passage – would make our working conditions safer and more comfortable.

Concerns have been raised that the passing of this referendum might negatively affect our contract negotiations. Brothers and sisters, the single most controlling factor affecting our negotiations is the 2% tax cap. The monies being borrowed in this referendum would be used for the sole purpose of improving the physical structures of our schools. The annual school budget voted on in May covers all other expenses the District incurs; salaries, health care, TRS & ERS contributions, energy costs, busing, etc. Capital projects and large repair items paid for through the referendum would actually ease the financial pressures on the general school budget. And, in future years as the bond is paid for, the tax break would give the District an added cushion to raise the acceptable tax cap limit. It would function, essentially, the same way one receives a tax break when paying off loan interest on a mortgage for a primary residence.

While public concerns about increased property taxes are quite real, debilitated schools and fields do not draw potential new residents to our communities. People move to Long Island and settle in certain towns, in large part, for the quality of the schools. We all know this. We also know that our District's per pupil expenditure is nearly at the bottom of the list and that, dollar for dollar, we outperform every other district on State exams. NEWSDAY prints the results. Therefore, they must be true! Imagine... a quality education with high quality teachers in well maintained, safe buildings. Don't our students deserve the best?

I do not profess to know how this referendum will fully affect us in the upcoming years. A crystal ball is not something I possess. However, based on what I do know, it is my opinion that the benefits of this referendum outweigh potential negative impacts. For those of you who reside in the District, I urge you to ask questions, educate yourselves, and vote December 4<sup>th</sup>.

In Unity,

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# A VICTORY

Anna Zurawinsky

Many thanks to everyone who helped push for the passage of the New York State Bill, S. 3926 A. This new law, signed by Gov. Cuomo, requires New York hospitals to provide notice to patients placed in observation status instead of being admitted into the hospital, thereby incurring thousands of dollars in charges not covered by insurance. Hospital administration must explain to patients the implications of their entry status. This means that our Medicare beneficiaries will not be charged with unknown costs. Our state legislators and Governor were deluged with calls and faxes and we WON! Again, many thanks.

But, don't let up! The retirees still need you to support Senator Schumer's Federal Bill S.569. The Schumer legislation would stop the three-day mandatory hospital stay required for Medicare to cover skilled rehabilitation nursing care. Call your members of Congress toll free at 866-327-8670 to co-sponsor and support S.569 to help our retirees and their families.

The next request affects young and old, and it is a difficult task for each one of us. Our survival as a nation depends on it. It is the AMERICAN JOBS ACT. Alfred Campo, the National Education Association Lobbyist in Washington, D C informed the NYSUT delegates that there is currently no job creation legislation on the docket in Congress and that tax breaks are given to corporations which outsource jobs abroad or build new companies in Asia/Europe while many of our citizens still search for meaningful jobs. What happened to the American Jobs Act that was introduced by our President in 2012? This Act is still in Committee, and there are no other programs for job creation currently under consideration.

Some of the important items in the American Jobs Act are:

- Tax cuts to help small businesses hire and grow
- Payroll tax cut for added workers or increased wages
- A Returning Heroes hiring tax credit for veterans
- Preventing up to 280,000 teacher layoffs and keeping police and fire fighters on the job
- Project Rebuild which will create jobs rehabilitating homes, businesses, and communities
- Four thousand dollars of tax credit to employers for hiring long term unemployed workers

Learn more about the American Jobs Act at [www.whitehouse.gov](http://www.whitehouse.gov). It is a disgrace that our elected legislators do not consider jobs for our citizens a top priority. Let us not surrender to the greedy 1%ers. Contact your Representatives and Senators now, and tell them to finalize the American Jobs Act and support its passage **NOW**.

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