



We will be asking the Court of Appeals, the state's highest court, to review this decision.

As the district offers HIP insurance in addition to the Empire Plan, and since we have determined that the HIP plan is not provided through NYSHIP but paid for directly to HIP, the PCT has suggested to the district that our buy-back provision be understood to be predicated on HIP and not the Empire Plan as has been assumed in the past. While we might have to make some adjustments because of differing premiums, this may be a way around the problem caused by the state. We are awaiting an official response from the District.

## **NEGOTIATIONS**

Always difficult in Plainview-Old Bethpage, a district that likes to compare its programs to the best districts on Long Island, but not compare the salaries of its employees to those same districts, have become even more trying in the era of the property tax cap that mandates budget increases no bigger than 2 percent or the rate of inflation, which ever is lower. For the coming year, we are looking at a cap that is close to zero because of the low rate of inflation in the metropolitan area. Unwilling to put forward budgets that are considerate of the staff, the district effectively asked its employees to subsidize the education of the children of the community. While understandable during the financial crisis that saw a significant cutback in state aid to public education, such an approach is less understandable and justifiable in better economic times. That has been the context for the stall in negotiations up until a day or two ago when we received the first full response from the Board of Education to our proposal for a settlement. At this writing, the PCT Negotiating Committee is yet to consider the Board's proposal. For now, all that can be said is that it is clearly movement in the process, and that's the first positive sign we have had that management is interested in a settlement.

At the recent high school staff demonstration at the last Board of Education meeting, PCT President Morty Rosenfeld told the Board publically that our Negotiating Committee was well aware of the constraints placed on their negotiations by the tax cap but that our proposals for settlement included realistic financial arrangements as well as items that while very important to the staff have no financial impact on the District.

Members have received notice of a General Membership Meeting of all district bargaining units for Thursday, January 14, 2016 at 4:15 P.M. in the auditorium of the Plainview Middle School. Members can expect a detailed update on the status of negotiations at that time as well as consideration of any recommendations the Committee chooses to make at that time. This is a very important meeting. Members have been given significant lead time to make whatever preparations are necessary to attend.

## **VOTE/COPE**

The PCT is winding up its 2015 VOTE/COPE drive this month. Thank you to those who have generously contributed to the important political work that lies ahead, both locally and at the state level.

Those who have not as yet given are asked to reflect on our recent political gains at both the national and state levels and to recognize that those successful efforts were funded by the political action contributions of the members of our unions.

The New York State Legislature will come back into session after the New Year. They will have before them the recommendations of the Cuomo Commission which essentially is to put a halt on the corporate education reform movement in New York. It will be essential that we keep the pressure on our elected leaders to do the right thing by public education and the people who work in it. That pressure is financed completely by our voluntary contributions to NYSUT's VOTE/COPE. Your dues dollars are not used for this purpose. Neither does any of your VOTE/COPE contributions go to finance federal elections.

Up to 40 percent of your contributions come back to the PCT for local political efforts. There will be three seats up for election on our Board of Education this spring. We will undoubtedly want to be active participants in that election. It's your VOTE/COPE dollars that make that happen. Please don't leave it to others to carry the burden. Do your share. Contribute to VOTE/COPE today.

## **STAFF DEVELOPMENT**

Members appear to be increasingly reporting staff development issues to the PCT Office. As those issues get referred to Tom Mattone, Chair of our Staff Development Committee, members are advised to contact Tom directly. He can be reached by phone at the High School Science department 434-3191 or by email at [tomjmatt@aol.com](mailto:tomjmatt@aol.com).

## **A HOLIDAY THOUGHT**

These have not been good times for people working in public education. Some days it seems like the whole world is conspiring to make our lives miserable. The fact is that very powerful forces are determined to destroy public education. They know that our unions are the most potent impediment to their achieving their goal. While each of us has more than enough to be angry and frustrated about, let's try to remember that our only hope to overcome these attacks is standing together. That doesn't mean we will always agree about everything, but it does mean that we remember that it is only in union that we are strong and able to confront those powerful forces bent on our destruction.