

# PROVOCATOR

October 2017

OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE BUFFALO TEACHERS FEDERATION VOLUME 45/NUMBER 4

DEDICATION  
SOLIDARITY  
PROFESSIONALISM  
PRIDE  
SECOND TO NONE



## Summits Prepare BTF Reps for Con Con

On November 7, when voters go to the polls, there is more at stake than who will be the next mayor of Buffalo. The BTF has spent the summer preparing for that day when voters will be asked, "Shall there be a convention to revise the Constitution and amend the same?"

It's a question the voters must answer once every 20 years. However, what most voters don't know is that a convention is not necessary to change the constitution. The Legislature can change it without a convention by proposing and passing amendments that are then voted on by the public.

The Con Con, if approved by the voters, is expected to cost taxpayers about \$350 million. Delegates to the convention, some already on the state payroll, will be paid hundreds of thousands of dollars in addition to their regular salaries. Some of the items that could be removed from the constitution include:

- The preclusion of the State from diminishing or impairing retirement benefits (i.e., if you are receiving a pension now, it could be reduced. If you are, for example, Tier 4, you could be made Tier 6)
- The right of collective bargaining for unions
- The opportunity for a sound basic education for our students

To prepare for this and other upcoming battles, the BTF conducted three summits in July, August, and October for BTF delegates, alternates, and building committee members. The summits, held in conjunction with New York State United Teachers (NYSUT), included information on the convention, what's at stake for public employees, and why the Con Con is a waste of money. Over 100 building leaders were trained on what is at stake and how to conduct one-on-one conversations. The trained representatives will turnkey the information to their fellow BTF leaders and they in turn will meet with each BTF member in their buildings and have one-on-one conversations with each about the convention and other union issues.

Representatives from the following schools attended one of the Summits: #3, 6, 12, 18, 19, 30, 31, 33, 37, 40@4, 42, 43, 45, 48@39, 54, 64, 65, 67, 69, 72, 79, 82, 91, 93, 94, 95, 97, 131 (The Academy School) @4, 156 (Frederick Law Olmsted), 197 (MST), 198 (I-Prep), 205 (Riverside), 206 (South Park), 207 (Lafayette), 302 (Emerson), 304 (Hutch Tech), 335 (Middle Early College), 357 (Pathways Academy), 363 (CATS), and 910 (Teacher Center).



1. BTF President Phil Rumore stresses the urgency of a NO vote in November.

2. With Mike Jeffers and Mark Mecca in the background, Fran Costanzo and Mary O'Rourke gear up for the Con Con Referendum.

3. Listening carefully to what is at stake, Bridget Hudson, Michelle Phillips, and Jeanne Cummings are ready to put their plan into action.

4. As BTF delegates, Temothye Peart, Jennifer Panzica, and Phyllis Piazza have accepted the responsibility of spreading the word about the Vote NO campaign in their buildings.



## NO BATTLE TOO BIG, NO BATTLE TOO SMALL, WE WILL FIGHT THEM ALL

Whether it's fighting the Federal Government, State Government, Supreme Court, Federal Courts, State Courts, the City, the School District or individual administrators, no battle can ever be too big or too small for us to fight.

On a National level, with the President's and U.S. Senate's new Supreme Court Justice now seated, we will no doubt see the end of agency fee and many other pro-worker provisions. This will allow employees to reap the benefits of union membership without paying. Others will have to pick up these freeloaders' share of the costs.

This, and many other anti-union laws, are in the federal pipeline.

There is but one goal here – break unions so that management can do as it pleases to workers; e.g. take away healthcare, job security, harass and intimidate, etc.

In New York State, we have a governor and New York State Senate (mostly the Republicans) making decisions that impact teaching and learning... while almost all of them have never spent a day in a classroom, much less taught in one (without the teacher present).

**The BTF is, with NYSUT's assistance, in court challenging the APPR (teacher devaluation) process.** We cannot let a process be utilized that is based upon using a test that has been so discredited that it can't be used until the new one is implemented in 2021.

I won't even go into the qualifications of some of the administrators who are doing the evaluations.

**Receivership** – Once again we have schools being evaluated based upon invalid tests that are given to students from other countries who speak little English and to some students who couldn't care less about how well they do.

Then, once the schools are maligned, the New

York State Commissioner of Education has the authority to rewrite our contract.

We will not let this stand!

**The BTF, with NYSUT's assistance is challenging Receivership in court.**

In New York State, we have all of our detractors lining up in support of the New York State Constitutional Convention.

We all know why most want to change the Constitution – to undermine retiree pensions, weaken labor laws and undo many of the protections we have... including constitutional right to free education.

**The BTF has been working with NYSUT and our many other friends to defeat the referendum that will be on the ballot on Election Day, Tuesday, November 7th, 2017.**

We have worked with several dedicated teachers in each school who will help organize your school to ensure the defeat of this attack.

The BTF has developed our own Vote No on the Constitutional Convention stickers, lawn signs and bumper stickers. They were distributed at the September Council of Delegates meeting.

Locally, we have a school District that is attempting to use the absurd Receivership laws and Commissioner's decisions to change the starting times at three (3) schools by changing them from early to late schools. Why do they say they are doing this? To improve the education of the students!! No, I'm not making this up.

As you know, the court ruled in our favor while, to no one's surprise, the Commissioner ruled to uphold her own decision.

**The BTF, with NYSUT's assistance is challenging this in Court.**

While wrongly viewed by some as smaller battles, the individual battles you have, whether it be a grievance, an attack by an administrator, horrendous teaching and learning conditions, etc. These battles are equal to or more important than what others may think of as bigger battles.

They directly affect you and your students' lives.

The District has too often shown a callous disregard for you and our contract.

We process approximately 180 (200 last year) grievances a year. We have over fifty (50) arbitrations scheduled and 50 more awaiting the assignment of an arbitrator.

**We have filed an improper practice charge (IP) with the Public Employment Relations Board (PERB) and have had our first conference with the Administrative Law Judge who will hear our charge against the District.**

The District's disregard for the grievance timelines and lack of action on grievances will be addressed.

This is just the beginning of our actions on this issue.

We greatly appreciate your understanding as we work to ensure that your grievance is heard and acted on fairly and in a timely manner.

**WE CANNOT AND WILL NOT LET THE HEDGE FUNDERS, BILLIONAIRES AND UNION HATERS, DEFEAT US. WE MUST AND WILL REMAIN UNITED AND STRONG.**

## BTF at a Glance

### **BTF President**

Philip Rumore

### **BTF Vice President**

Rebecca Pordum

### **BTF Treasurer**

Joseph Montante

### **BTF Secretary**

Melinda MacPherson-Sullivan



### **BTF Executive Committee Members**

#### **Pre-K-6**

Rachel Binda-Lis,  
Sophia Howard-Johnson,  
Trisha Rosokoff, Janine Schuster  
Christopher Stephens

#### **7-12**

Dennis Brancato, Patrick Foster,  
Lynn Garcia, Melissa Kenney,  
M. Sue Raichilson, Chris Salamone,  
Eve Shippens

#### **K-12**

Susan Marie Baker, Nicole Herkey,  
Isabella Keegan, Catherine Lipsitz,  
Mark Mecca, Gregory Sawicki,  
Elizabeth Spiro-Carmen

#### **At Large**

Marc Bruno, Tom Gattie, Mike Mecca

#### **BTF Headquarters Staff**

Philip Rumore, *President*  
Joseph Montante, *Presidential Assistant*  
Rebecca Pordum, *Presidential Assistant*  
Tim Connick, *NYSUT Counsel*  
Deana Fox, *NYSUT Labor Relations Specialist*  
Dennis Licherelli, *NYSUT Labor Relations Specialist*  
Nick Whitman, *NYSUT Labor Relations Specialist*

Visit Our Updated Website  
[www.btfny.org](http://www.btfny.org)

## PROVOCATOR

#### **BTF Provocator Staff**

Joseph Montante, *managing editor, photo editor*  
Chris Salamone, *editor*

The **Provocator** is the official publication of the Buffalo Teachers Federation. It will be published five times during the 2017-2018 school year as a service to BTF members and interested parties in the community. Subscription price is included in BTF dues.

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The **BTF** is an affiliate of **NYSUT**, **AFT** and **NEA**.

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# Letters to the Editor

## BTF Supports Boys To Men Conference

This letter is written to your organization because you believed in our cause and made a donation toward our 3rd annual Boys to Men Youth Empowerment Conference (BTM).

It's because of organizations like yours we are able to do the things we do. Your contribution went toward supporting our 2017 Boys to Men Conference. We were able to purchase shirts and neckties, giveaways, as well as other pertinent items for the boys.

We take pride in our work. We are committed and determined to provide families and children with the care, support and encouragement they need to strive, reach high and be successful.

Thank you! Your organization helped make a difference in the lives of these boys who attended this year's conference. We were very excited, this year we had over 100 boys participate. Every year the conference is getting larger and with your continued support we can grow every year.

Words can't express how much we appreciate you! On behalf of myself, the Board of Directors, and especially the boys who benefitted from your donation, again thank you.

With Great Humbleness,  
Jacqueline Mines  
President/CEO  
Helping Families & Children of America, Inc.

## BTF Supports Young Audiences/Waterfront

The following note was written by an exemplary 2nd grade student from Buffalo's Waterfront Elementary School.

"Hi. My name is Said. In Mr. Teloh's 2nd grade class, we worked with Mr. Jeremy after school and created comic books."

Mr. Michael Teloh's 2nd grade class worked with both Victoria Perez and Jeremy Stock in their after-school residencies. Students explored their individual super powers and then brought them to life on paper via caricatures in a comic book that was ultimately printed out for each of them to take home.

For 20 years, Young Audiences and Waterfront Elementary School have worked together in successful partnership. Students connect with artists through creative learning opportunities every year. This collaboration continues to provide young people at all nine grade levels with intensive curriculum tied to arts learning experiences. (Former) Principal David Hills credits partnerships like ours with boosting the school from the lowest achievement rating and in need of improvement to one in good standing.

Thank you for making our partnership with Buffalo's Waterfront Elementary School possible!

Young Audiences, WNY

## BTF Backs Brew Bash

On behalf of the Board and staff at Theatre of Youth (TOY) - thank you for your generous contribution of \$300 to TOY's 2017 Brew Bash. For your records, no goods or services were provided in exchange for this sponsorship.

This year's Brew Bash helped raise over \$26,000 towards our mission of providing Western New York youth with quality professional theatre experiences that spark imaginations and encourage creative confidence. To more fully understand the tangible benefits children receive from programming like TOY's, consider the following statistics showing that low Social Economic Status (SES) students involved in the arts were:

- 2 times more likely to win an award for academic achievement
- 4 times more likely to participate in a math or science fair
- 3 times more likely to win an award for school attendance
- over 3 times more likely to be elected to class office in school
- over 4 times more likely to engage in community service
- 8 times more likely to win a community service award

Children engaged with the arts have a decisive, demonstrable advantage. Your support ensures that we can continue to give all students these opportunities. We are humbled by and grateful for your partnership with TOY.

Thank you for being a champion to the youth of Western New York.

With much gratitude,  
Cynthia Giganti Ludwig  
Event Chair/ Secretary  
Kevin Leary, Managing Director

## Did You Know...

Normally, a teacher must work 160 days in order to move up a step on the salary schedule (years where a teacher worked less than 160 days can be combined, however.) But did you know that a new teacher who has completed at least 100 days of continuous, full-time service as a first year probationary or temporary teacher is entitled to a full pay increment?

This increment is in addition to the regular increment they will receive on the September 1 following the completion of the teacher's probationary term. If you didn't know these facts, check out in Article XXV, C, 1a of the contract. It may apply to you!

## Tell Us What's Happening at Your School

Are you running a special performance at your building? Taking students on an overnight field trip? Was there a lesson that went exceptionally well that you would like to share with your BTF colleagues? We want to hear about it and may feature it in a future edition of the Provocator. Photos of such events are especially welcome. Please send the following information and any related photos via e-mail to [salamone426@aol.com](mailto:salamone426@aol.com).

Name \_\_\_\_\_ School/position: \_\_\_\_\_

Personal Email \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Description of event \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

All submissions become the property of the Provocator.

# BTF Executive Committee Attends NYSUT Summer Leadership Conference

Legal updates, the New York State Constitutional Convention, and litigation aimed at destroying labor unions were among the topics of a three-day Summer Leadership Conference sponsored by New York State United Teachers. The event was held August 16-18 at the Bayfront Convention Center in Erie, PA. Some 210 educators and school support staff from across Western New York were in attendance.

Among those participating in the conference were 17 members of the BTF Executive Committee, including President Philip Rumore, Vice-President Rebecca Pordum, and Treasurer Joseph Montante. Also attending were: Susan Baker, Dennis Brancato, Lynn Garcia, Nicole Herkey, Sophia Howard-Johnson, Melissa Kenney, Sue Raichilson, Trisha Rosokoff, Chris Salamone, Greg Sawicki, Janine Schuster, Eve Shippens, Elizabeth Spiro-Carman, and Ruyvette Townsend. Participation in the conference was financed through a National Education Association (NEA) grant.

The program got underway with remarks by Michael Deely, NYSUT Regional Director, who told attendees they need to be prepared for upcoming battles against unions. The remainder of the conference was divided into 90-minute workshops designed to provide information on union-related issues.

Among the workshops featured were Apathy to Action, Doomsday Prepping, Grievances and Contract Interpretation, and You Be the Judge.



1. **ABOVE:** BTF President Phil Rumore and VP Rebecca Pordum listen as NYSUT attorney Claire Sellers presents a legal update.



2. In a scenario of "What If's", Melissa Kenny, Sophia Howard-Johnson, and Trish Resokoff brainstorm ways to better serve our members.

3. With potential changes to the agency fee looming, Susan Baker, Greg Sawicki, Chris Salamone, and Nicole Herkey prioritize ways to address members' concerns.



## Crowds Thrilled to See Teachers Marching in Neighborhood Parades

There's a new group making the rounds of local parades these days and the crowds are going wild. The BTF has participated in three recent parades and have been met with warm welcomes at each. Our Community Engagement Committee, chaired by Eve Shippens, is making itself known in communities throughout the city by participating in neighborhood events.

First was the Juneteenth Festival on the East Side, where BTF members carried our union banner in the opening parade. Under the direction of Ruyvette Townsend, co-chair of the Public Relations Committee, the BTF has participated in the festival for many years. As has happened in the past, a table was set up where backpacks and rulers were distributed to children.

In August, a group of BTF members joined the procession for the Puerto Rican and Hispanic Day Parade on the West Side. Marchers again distributed backpacks to children along the route. Last up was the Labor Day Parade in South Buffalo. Marching along Abbott Road to Cazenovia Park, a good showing of BTF members trekked alongside other members of NYSUT, throwing candy to the children along the route.

During all three parades, the BTF was met with resounding applause and appreciation from the crowds. Participation in the parades is one way the BTF is getting involved with the community and making itself visible to the public. All BTF members are welcome and urged to participate.



BTF at Juneteenth Festival Parade



BTF at Puerto Rican & Hispanic Day Parade



BTF at Labor Day Parade

**RUMORE CONTROL  
881-4818**

# BTF Releases Auditor's Report

# 2015-2016



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## INDEPENDENT AUDITORS' REPORT

The Executive Officers  
Buffalo Teachers Federation, Inc.

We have audited the accompanying balance sheets of Buffalo Teachers Federation, Inc. as of August 31, 2016 and 2015, and the related statements of activities and cash flows for the years then ended, and the related notes to the financial statements.

### Management's Responsibility for the Financial Statements

Management is responsible for the preparation and fair presentation of these financial statements in accordance with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America; this includes the design, implementation, and maintenance of internal control relevant to the preparation and fair presentation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

### Auditors' Responsibility

Our responsibility is to express an opinion on these financial statements based on our audits. We conducted our audits in accordance with auditing standards generally accepted in the United States of America. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements are free from material misstatement.

An audit involves performing procedures to obtain audit evidence about the amounts and disclosures in the financial statements. The procedures selected depend on the auditors' judgment, including the assessment of the risks of material misstatement of the financial statements, whether due to fraud or error. In making those risk assessments, the auditor considers internal control relevant to the entity's preparation and fair presentation of the financial statements in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the entity's internal control. Accordingly, we express no such opinion. An audit also includes evaluating the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of significant accounting estimates made by management, as well as evaluating the overall presentation of the financial statements.

We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our audit opinion.

### Opinion

In our opinion, the financial statements referred to above present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of Buffalo Teachers Federation, Inc. as of August 31, 2016 and 2015, and the changes in its net assets and its cash flows for the years then ended in accordance with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America.

January 17, 2017

## BUFFALO TEACHERS FEDERATION, INC.

### Statements of Activities

For the years ended August 31,	2016	2015
Revenue:		
Member dues	\$ 3,222,814	\$ 3,126,976
Investment income (loss) (Note 3)	236,867	(56,994)
Rent	121,212	121,212
Advertising and other	18,050	14,812
<b>Total revenue</b>	<b>3,598,943</b>	<b>3,206,006</b>
Expenses:		
Per capita dues	2,100,300	2,067,583
Personnel (see page 9)	811,636	795,707
Activities and programs (see page 9)	201,220	172,625
Other administrative (see page 10)	254,078	265,720
<b>Total expenses</b>	<b>3,367,234</b>	<b>3,301,635</b>
Excess (deficit) of revenue over expenses	231,709	(95,629)
Post-retirement health care benefit obligation (Note 6)	(478,679)	151,840
Change in net assets	(246,970)	56,211
Net assets - beginning	1,768,272	1,712,061
<b>Net assets - ending</b>	<b>\$ 1,521,302</b>	<b>\$ 1,768,272</b>

See accompanying notes.

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## BUFFALO TEACHERS FEDERATION, INC.

### Balance Sheets

August 31,	2016	2015
<b>Assets</b>		
<b>Current assets:</b>		
Cash	\$ 283,684	\$ 213,102
Receivables (Note 2)	198,804	289,787
Prepaid expenses	27,522	20,982
Investments (Note 3)	3,354,557	3,065,327
	<b>3,864,567</b>	<b>3,589,198</b>
Property and equipment, net (Note 4)	72,854	63,640
	<b>\$ 3,937,421</b>	<b>\$ 3,652,838</b>
<b>Liabilities and Net Assets</b>		
<b>Current liabilities:</b>		
Current portion of accrued post-retirement health care benefits (Note 6)	\$ 32,600	\$ 32,600
Accounts payable	1,864	21,007
Accrued expenses	114,791	111,806
Deferred revenue	17,000	-
Payable to affiliate (Note 5)	557,075	557,075
	<b>723,330</b>	<b>722,488</b>
Accrued post-retirement health care benefits (Note 6)	1,692,789	1,162,078
<b>Net assets - unrestricted</b>	<b>1,521,302</b>	<b>1,768,272</b>
	<b>\$ 3,937,421</b>	<b>\$ 3,652,838</b>

See accompanying notes.

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## BUFFALO TEACHERS FEDERATION, INC.

### Statements of Cash Flows

For the years ended August 31,	2016	2015
<b>Operating activities:</b>		
Change in net assets	\$ (246,970)	\$ 56,211
Adjustments to reconcile change in net assets to net cash flows from operating activities:		
Depreciation	11,248	10,847
Net (gain) loss on investments	(150,335)	139,625
Changes in other operating assets and liabilities:		
Receivables	90,983	(58,947)
Prepaid expenses	(6,540)	(6,485)
Accounts payable	(19,143)	(62,581)
Accrued expenses	2,985	3,650
Deferred revenue	17,000	-
Accrued postretirement health care benefits	530,711	(91,519)
<b>Net operating activities</b>	<b>229,939</b>	<b>(9,199)</b>
<b>Investing activities:</b>		
Purchase of property and equipment	(20,462)	(19,293)
Purchase of investments	(7,804,939)	(7,762,714)
Proceeds from sale of investments	7,666,044	7,732,777
<b>Net investing activities</b>	<b>(159,357)</b>	<b>(49,230)</b>
Net change in cash	70,582	(58,429)
Cash - beginning	213,102	271,531
<b>Cash - ending</b>	<b>\$ 283,684</b>	<b>\$ 213,102</b>

See accompanying notes.

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**Notes to Financial Statements**

**1. Summary of Significant Accounting Policies:**

**Organization:**

Buffalo Teachers Federation, Inc. (the Federation) is the bargaining unit for teachers employed by the City of Buffalo Board of Education (the Board of Education).

**Cash:**

At various times, cash in financial institutions may exceed federally insured limits, and subject the Federation to concentrations of credit risk.

**Investments:**

Investments are stated at fair value based on quoted prices in active markets.

**Property and Equipment:**

Property and equipment is stated at cost net of accumulated depreciation. Depreciation is provided over estimated useful lives using the straight-line method.

**Income Taxes:**

The Federation is a 501(c)(5) organization exempt from taxation under Section 501(a) of the Internal Revenue Code. The Federation believes it is no longer subject to examination by Federal and State taxing authorities for years prior to fiscal 2013.

**Use of Estimates:**

The preparation of financial statements in conformity with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America requires management to make estimates and assumptions that affect the amounts reported in the financial statements and accompanying notes. Actual results may differ from those estimates.

**Subsequent Events:**

The Federation has evaluated events and transactions for potential recognition or disclosure in the financial statements through January 17, 2017 (the date the financial statements were available to be issued).

**2. Receivables:**

	2016	2015
Affiliate (Note 5)	\$ 26,659	\$ 117,503
National and State Organization	90,346	89,264
Member loans	80,640	80,890
Interest	1,158	2,130
	<u>\$ 198,803</u>	<u>\$ 289,787</u>

**3. Investments:**

	2016	2015
U.S. Government securities	\$ 3,206	\$ 4,098
Common stock	800,477	809,454
Mutual funds	1,190,361	995,233
Corporate bonds	31,024	72,061
Certificates of deposit	970,203	732,236
Money market	359,286	452,245
	<u>\$ 3,354,557</u>	<u>\$ 3,065,327</u>

Investment income (loss) is as follows:

	2016	2015
Interest and dividends	\$ 86,532	\$ 82,631
Net gains (losses)	150,335	(139,625)
	<u>\$ 236,867</u>	<u>\$ (56,994)</u>

**4. Property and Equipment:**

	2016	2015
Land	\$ 25,000	\$ 25,000
Building and improvements	433,322	412,860
Office furniture and equipment	180,325	180,325
Computer	76,284	76,284
	<u>714,931</u>	<u>694,469</u>
Less accumulated depreciation	642,077	630,829
	<u>\$ 72,854</u>	<u>\$ 63,640</u>

**5. Transactions with Affiliate:**

The Federation receives rent (for the use of a portion of its building) from Buffalo Teachers Federation, Inc. Supplemental Benefit Fund (SBF), a tax-exempt, health and welfare organization. This rent totaled \$17,000 for each of the years ended August 31, 2016 and 2015.

The Federation also remits payment of certain SBF personnel and other expenses for which it is reimbursed. Amounts owed to the Federation from SBF at August 31, 2016 and 2015 included in receivables were \$26,659 and \$117,503.

During 2001, the Federation received \$917,075 to pay for SBF benefits and any future Federation legal, consultant and administrative costs in connection with a back pay settlement pursuant to the provisions of a teachers' contract settlement. Amounts due to SBF under this settlement totaled \$557,075 at August 31, 2016 and 2015.

**6. Post-Retirement Health Care Benefits:**

The Federation provides postretirement health care benefits to all retirees who attain age 55 with fifteen years of service. The benefits are noncontributory in nature, and it is the Federation's practice to fund these benefits as incurred.

The status of the postretirement health benefit plan at and for the years ended August 31, 2016 and 2015 is as follows:

	2016	2015
Accumulated postretirement benefit obligation (APBO)	\$ 1,725,389	\$ 1,194,678
Accrued postretirement benefit obligation (benefit liability)	1,725,389	1,194,678
Accumulated adjustment increase to net assets	(232,078)	(710,757)
Benefit cost	71,788	84,491
Benefits paid	19,756	24,170

At August 31, 2016 and 2015, the following items included as adjustments to net assets available for benefits had not yet been recognized as components to benefit cost:

	2016	2015
Net (gain) loss	\$ (232,078)	\$ (710,757)

	2016	2015
Weighted-average assumptions used to determine benefit liability:		
Yearly health care premium increases	6%	6%
Discount rate	4.25%	4.25%
Weighted-average assumptions used to determine net periodic benefit cost:		
Discount rate	4.25%	4.25%

For 2016 and 2015, yearly health care premium increases were estimated at 6% per year for all subsequent years.

Expected future annual benefit payments:

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022-2026
		\$ 32,600	33,100	33,400	33,600	33,600
						297,700
						<u>\$ 464,000</u>

For 2016, a 1% increase in the trend rate for health care costs would have increased the APBO by approximately \$515,000.

# Math Teacher Writes Song about the NYS Constitutional Convention

Jeff Grossi, a hip-hop artist and math teacher at Middle Early College, has written a song urging New Yorkers to vote against a Constitutional Convention.

This is one of many songs Grossi has written regarding educational issues.

To the right are some of the lyrics of his latest recording.



## Say No to the Con Con by Jeff Grossi aka MCZILL

**INTRO:**

On Election Day New Yorkers vote wisely to this question  
Shall there be a convention for constitution revisions  
Vote no; it's a \$350 million  
Dollar bash for the cast of politicians

**REFRAIN:**

So vote no, no to the Con Con  
Vote no, no to the Con Con x3

No convention for constitution revisions  
No \$350 million dollar bash for politicians

So vote no, no to the Con Con  
Vote no, no to the Con Con

Say no to a constitutional convention  
Give two thumbs down on this referendum question

So vote no, no to the Con Con  
Vote no, no to the Con Con

**VERSE:**

Say no to a constitutional convention  
Such a very unnecessary deception  
We don't need a convention for constitution revisions

No \$350 million dollar bash for politicians

Here's an easier concept  
Changes citizens want can be made through the normal legislative process  
Yes! Already we can change our constitution at will  
We draft, discuss, then vote to approve the bill

Voting yes robs  
Taxpayers pay delegates two salaries for the same jobs  
We don't need a congress carbon copy  
We need to increase the quality of life for everybody

Say no to a constitutional convention  
If you snooze you'll lose this important voting lesson  
They will schedule cuts like surgeries  
Ruin public schools, colleges, universities

A recording of Grossi's song also can be heard on the BTF website under the Audio/Video tab.

# 11 BTF Members Attend NEA Convention

Despite constant attacks on public education by privateers as well as some government officials, teacher unions have the power to make a difference. That was the message during the 2017 National Education Association (NEA) Representative Assembly held this past summer.

In her keynote address to 7,500 delegates attending the RA, Lily Eskelsen García, president of the NEA, said challenges ahead will not prevent public education from moving forward. Some of those challenges include dangers from the agenda of President Donald Trump and Education Secretary Betty DeVos. "This is not a drill," Eskelsen García added. "We stand between a profiteer and his profits. We have a president who resides at the dangerous intersection of arrogance and ignorance and travels with a moral compass that always points to his own self-interest. We can win. We have the power and they know it."

Eskelsen García declined an invitation to meet with DeVos because DeVos did not answer questions about accountability and transparency of charter schools. "I will not allow the National Education Association to be used by Donald Trump or Betsy DeVos", she told the delegates to resounding applause. "I do not trust their motives. I do not believe their alternative facts. I see no reason to assume they will do what is best for our students and their families. There will be no photo-op!"

The NEA Representative Assembly was held July 1-6 in Boston, MA. BTF President Philip Rumore and Vice-President Rebecca Pordum attended the convention as BTF delegates. Nine BTF members also attended as delegates of NYSUT (New York State United Teachers). Those delegates were Rachel Bindalis, Desiree Breckenridge-Barnes, Lynn Diagostino, Lynn Garcia, Tom Gattie, Melinda MacPherson-Sullivan, Sue Raichilson, Chris Salamone, and Cathleen Stearns.

During the RA, delegates acted on 159 new business items as well as numerous amendments to the constitution, policy statements, and legislative actions. For complete coverage, including video of the speeches given by Lily Eskelsen García and others, visit [nea.org/ra](http://nea.org/ra)

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- Suzanna C.G.



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## Save the Date

**October 14**  
Breast Cancer Walk  
10 AM, Outer Harbor

**October 27 & 28**  
Delegate Training Workshop

**November 7**  
Election Day - Vote NO!  
to Constitutional Convention

**November 16 & 17**  
Thanksgiving Food Drive  
Drop food off at BTF office

**November 20 & 21**  
Packing & distributing food  
to agencies for Thanksgiving

## Six Spend Summer Talking to Members

While many teachers were enjoying their well-deserved summer off, about 50 teachers and support staff from across New York State went door to door to meet other members of NYSUT and discuss union issues.

Among those teachers were six members of the BTF Executive Committee. Lynn Garcia, Sophia Howard-Johnson, Melissa Kenney, Trish Rosokoff, Chris Salamone, and Eve Shippens, along with members of BEST and the Buffalo Substitutes United combed the Buffalo area and its suburbs.

The group was part of a NYSUT initiative known as Education Summer in which the participants met with NYSUT members for one-on-one conversations. These conversations were aimed at finding out what issues NYSUT members are concerned with, to update member information, and ask members to become actively involved in their unions. The other goal was to determine if members were aware of the upcoming vote for a New York State Constitutional Convention and whether or not they were planning to vote against it. Participants also placed "Vote No to the Constitutional Convention" signs on their lawns.

During the six-week program, participants knocked on 33,097 doors across the state and had conversations with 8,419 members or about 25% of those visited. About 65% of those members knew about the NYS Constitutional Convention and, after the conversations, 90% of all members also said they would talk to friends, neighbors, and colleagues about the Con Con. Lawn signs were placed at 3,123 homes.



Pictured left to right: Melissa Kenney, Eve Shippens, Lynn Garcia, NYSUT Organizer Louisa Pacheco, Chris Salamone, Sophia Howard-Johnson, and Trish Rosokoff

Participants in the program went through an intensive three-day training at the Member Organizing Institute in Albany and returned for a debriefing at the end of the program. Many reported that NYSUT members were pleased to meet with representatives of the union and eager to discuss pressing issues, most notably the Constitutional Convention. NYSUT is gearing up for Education Fall and will be knocking on the doors of the members missed in the summer campaign.



## Social Committee Seeks Ideas For Family Events

The BTF Social Committee is seeking ideas for family social events, such as baseball outings, picnics, zoo day, etc.

If you have any suggestions, complete the following form and mail it to Nicole Herkey, c/o BTF Social Committee, 271 Porter Ave., Buffalo, NY 14201.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Cell phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Suggestion: \_\_\_\_\_

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## Physical Education Teacher Wins Contest

Andrew Grine, a physical education teacher at Schools 64 and 65 won 2nd place in the Get Moving New York video contest sponsored by Flaghouse Sports. In addition to getting to pose with Phil Rumore, Grine won a \$250 cash award and also a free conference registration to this year's NYSAHPERD state conference in November. This was in addition to receiving a \$100 award for submitting a winning lesson plan. Grine is no stranger to this contest having won first place in last year's video contest. The BTF offers its congratulations to Mr. Grine.

**BELOW:** Phys Ed teacher Andrew Grine gives a thumbs up as he poses with BTF President Phil Rumore.



## Buffalo Teachers Have Heart

Tim Agugloa  
Rosaire Banks  
Jennifer Bauer  
Hazel Beharry

Wendy Bly  
Barbara Bogdan  
Joanie Cavanaugh  
Betty Cendrowski  
Jeanne Cheney  
Kevin Coady  
Daniel Collins  
Marilynne Crawford  
Megan Cullen

Irene Cudzilo  
Roseanne Cullis  
Lorette Dibella  
Laura Dierken  
Denise Eberhardt  
Melanie Flynn  
Linda Gallaway Lawson  
Amy Gambon Dennis  
Jacquelyn Gerwitz Dunn  
Kevin Gibson  
Sebastiana Giuca-Bauman  
Karen Glavey Kane  
Vera Gracievski  
Robert Harms  
Lori Harrington  
May Jo Hellerer

Wendy Hess  
Jamie Holler  
Isabella Keegan  
Anna Klapakis

Anna Kleyman  
Michele Lash  
Shirley MacKinnon  
Melinda MacPherson  
Laura Martino  
Albertina Mogavero  
Joseph Montante  
Rebecca Moorman  
Carolyn Ohlson  
Phyllis Piazza  
Rebecca Pordum  
Mary Priestler  
Lawrence Ronald  
Trisha Rosokoff  
Phil Rumore  
David Sardo

School 45  
School 54  
School 61  
School 72  
School 95

**A Big Thank You to Those Individuals/Schools that Donated to the Red Cross/Hurricane Harvey Fund**

**We also Thank the Teachers not listed above who made a contribution as part of a school-wide donation.**



**ABOVE:** Maranella Lis, 4, daughter of BPS Teacher Rachel Binda Lis, raised \$500 selling lemonade outside her Kenmore home for the victims of the Texas hurricane. According to her mom, the idea was all Maranella's.

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Optician

**Joe Frandina**  
Optician

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Call Today for An Appointment With our Optometrist!

Joe is the Husband of BTF member Barbara Polino Frandina

## The Sick Leave Bank – A Valuable Benefit

What would you do if you were ill and all of your sick days had been exhausted?

Could you get by without pay checks? Would you be able to pay your rent? Make car payments? Feed your family?

Such a situation would be very difficult for most teachers. But Article XXVI, Paragraph G of the Master Contract states “The Board of Education agrees to provide administrative cooperation with the Federation in the establishment of a Sick Leave Bank Program. The administration of the Sick Leave Bank shall be the responsibility of the Federation according to the rules of procedure as established by the Federation.”

Indeed, many teachers have made use of the Sick Leave Bank and in times of crisis, it can be a lifesaver. But few teachers realize that this is a negotiated benefit and, in fact, one that did not always exist.

The Sick Leave Bank was established in the collective bargaining agreement ratified on September 4, 1973. Prior to that, if a teacher ran out of days, pay warrants would abruptly end.

Like everything in the contract, the Sick Leave bank was not merely given to the teachers but rather was awarded in exchange for something else. Collective bargaining is always about give and take.

Originally conceived to benefit two teachers who were receiving treatments for cancer, the Sick Leave Bank has allowed teachers to receive their salaries after their own sick days have been exhausted.

The idea is that teachers make an annual donation of sick days to the bank. The trustees of the Sick Leave Bank, all of whom are BTF members, meet biweekly and maintain an accounting of the number of days remaining.

In addition, they review applications for teachers in need and remain vigilant about potential abuse of benefits, all while maintaining strict confidentiality. A physician’s statement is required with the application and the trustees may require a member requesting and/or receiving benefits to submit to an examination by a doctor of the SLB’s choice.

The current trustees are Dennis Brancato, Sophia Howard-Johnson, and Melissa Kenney. Tom Gattie serves as an alternate should a trustee be unavailable. All of these teachers also are members of the BTF Executive Committee.

“It is a tedious and time

consuming job and most of our colleagues are not aware of how much time we devote,” said Howard-Johnson. “We spend a lot of hours working on Sick Leave Bank so that our teachers can survive during a crisis.”

If you are new to Buffalo Public Schools, you have 90 days from the date of your hiring to join the Sick Leave Bank. Otherwise, BTF members may enroll between June 1st and 20th each year.

Joining is highly recommended so you are not caught in an impossible situation. The trustees report that the Sick Leave Bank is running well and that salary is being paid to several teachers who otherwise would have no money coming in. The Federation intends to keep this negotiated benefit as the trustees continue to make sure the Sick Leave Bank is there for you if you ever need it and that the days are only used if needed.



**ABOVE:** In one of their biweekly meetings, SLB Trustees Dennis Brancato, Sophia Howard-Johnson, and Melissa Kenney review applications for benefits.

## Why is a Con Con a Bad Idea?

1. At risk: The right to unionize and bargain collectively. The strength of unions could be jeopardized.
2. At risk: Workers Compensation. Safeguard your rights if you’re injured on the job.
3. At risk: Public pension protections. The constitution guarantees your pension will be there and cannot be diminished or impaired.
4. During the last convention, four out of five delegates were career politicians and Albany insiders.
5. The environment – New York State’s constitution has the nation’s strongest protections for forever wild areas like the Adirondacks and the Catskills. Greedy developers could push to undo these safeguards.
6. The social safety net – The state constitution ensures that the state provide for citizens in need.
7. Public education- The state constitution guarantees our students the right to a free public education.
8. A constitutional convention will cost about \$350,000,000 in taxpayer dollars and lawmakers can collect salaries and pension credits as elected officials and as a delegate simultaneously.
9. Opening the state constitution is like opening Pandora’s Box. You can’t predict what changes delegates will propose.
10. A process already exists to amend the state constitution and it costs nothing!

**Vote NO on November 7th!**





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Most services are covered in full. Co-insurance, deductibles & non-covered services are the responsibility of the member.

## BTF Committees Being Formed

With the school year underway, BTF committees are preparing for this year's activities. If you are interested in serving on a committee, please complete the form below and return it in the PONY, US Mail, or fax to the BTF, at 881-6678. Most committees are open, although a few have limited spaces. BTF committees include:

- Communication/Technology
- Community Engagement
- Educators of Special Education
- Ethnic Minority Involvement
- Finance
- Grievance
- Instructional and Professional Development
- Membership
- Political Action
- Provocator
- Public Relations
- Sick Leave Bank
- Social
- Teacher Center Policy Board
- VOTE COPE

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Personal email: \_\_\_\_\_

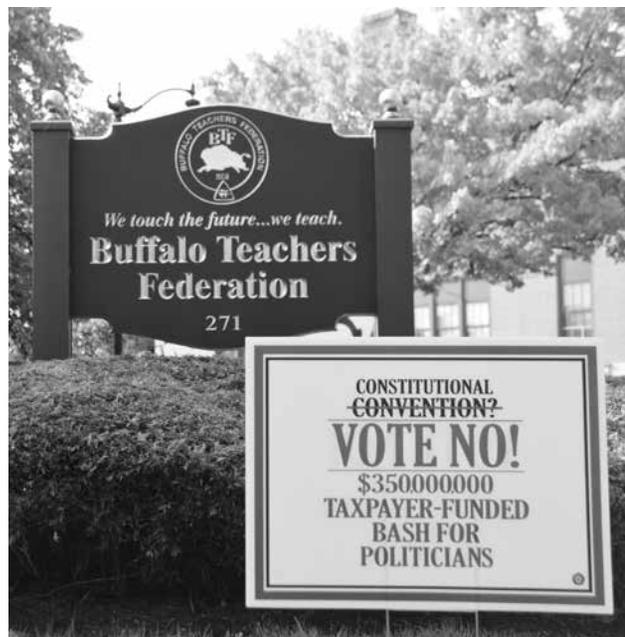
Committees interested in:

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Please return to BTF c/o Rebecca Pordum



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## Keeping Records is a Must

by **Claire Sellers**, Associate NYSUT Counsel

Whether you are new to the Buffalo City School District or a veteran teacher, make sure you are saving your records. The District has over 7,000 current employees' and 30,000 current students' records to store and maintain. As such, the District frequently is unable to provide accurate personnel records for its employees.

As a Buffalo City School District and New York State public school teacher, you are entitled to certain benefits. To protect those benefits, it is the best practice to maintain the records listed below. Teachers who maintain the records listed below are likely to have better overall outcomes when a question of their benefits or rights arises.

- Education Transcripts
- Proof of Certification(s)
- Advanced Credit Differential (ACD) form copy
- Prior Credit Experience Form (When requesting this from a former employer, include two self-addressed envelopes, one for the District and one for you. That way you receive a copy along with the District).
- Substitute Teaching Record(s)
- Temporary Appointment Letter(s)
- Probationary Appointment Letter(s)
- Tenure Appointment Letter(s)
- Any document relating to a change in tenure area OR a new appointment
- Coaching Appointment Letter(s)
- Professional Development Records (Keep a print out from PGS or at a minimum, the name of the course, date of the course, course instructor, and course number)

- Any record of extra activity hours; e.g. after school programs and interview teams
- Evaluations and Annual Professional Performance Reviews
- Paystubs – keep for 12 months (Paystubs show your rate of pay and accrued sick and personal leave days).
- Layoff notice(s)
- Leave requests and approval letters
- Accident Report / Workers Comp C-2 Forms (If assaulted make sure you use the word “assaulted” on your report).
- Family Medical Leave Act paperwork
- Americans with Disabilities Act paperwork
- Retirement Notification Letter
- Any documents mailed or emailed to the School Board or School District representatives

Maintain the above records as a hard copy or scan and store a digital copy in a secure location in your home. This is not an exhaustive list. When in doubt, keep a copy of the record. If you are using an email address to maintain your records, make sure it is a personal email address and not a school email address. Where possible, obtain a date-stamped copy, a certified return receipt, or save the email identifying the date and time.

*This article is for informational purposes only. It does not constitute legal advice, nor does it establish an attorney-client relationship.*