

The FEDERATIONIST



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Ron Beaupre is shown with Marcia Reback accepting his outstanding Union Service Award. For convention pictures, see pps. 4-5.



RIFTHP Thinking Math Institute attracts teachers from across the state. See article on p. 6.

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Delegates Elect Officers



Frank Flynn, President of the Cranston Local, newly-elected Vice-President of the RIFTHP.

The 2008 RIFTHP Convention, held on October 25 at the Providence Westin Hotel, elected officers for the next two years. New to the rank of Vice-President is Frank Flynn, President of the Cranston Teachers' Alliance. Also new to the Council as Assistant Treasurer is Pawtucket Vice-President Ron Beaupre.

Marcia Reback was re-elected to her ninth term as President. Also re-elected to the position of Vice-President were Alma Egan, Kelly Erinakes, Don Vanasse, Steve Smith and Jason Blank. Jack Boudreau continues as Corresponding Secretary and Lori DeSimone as Recording Secretary. John Maguire, the President of the North Providence

Federation of Teachers, is again the Treasurer.

The keynote speaker at the Convention was President Emeritus of the AFT, Ed McElroy. In his address, McElroy spoke of the importance of engaging politically both in getting good policymakers elected and in maintaining a relationship with officeholders once they are in place. McElroy, who just retired from the presidency of the AFT, will be remembered as the president who saw the greatest growth in AFT membership since its inception and the president who developed great political clout for the AFT.

The Convention delegates voted to endorse the candidacies of Senator Jack Reed, Representative Patrick

Kennedy and Representative Jim Langevin. Rhode Island has the benefit of having a complete Congressional delegation that has a 100% labor and education record, including Senator Sheldon Whitehouse, who was elected to the US Senate with the RIFTHP endorsement two years ago.

Representative Langevin addressed the Convention and explained that he expects Congress to take up the re-authorization of NCLB after the new President takes office and that health care will be one of the first issues that he expects to be taken up by the new President, Barack Obama.

The Convention delegates passed nine resolutions. They called upon the RIFTHP to:

- ◆ Introduce legislation to have the contribution rate of state employees and teachers in Tier B of the Retirement system be reduced by 1%;
- ◆ Introduce legislation to allow for card check in the organizing of traditional charter school teachers;
- ◆ Introduce legislation to make teachers in Mayoral Charter School Academies, public employees with the

Bits and Pieces...

Two years in Review; Mostly Good News

If you're a teacher, there couldn't have been any better news than that the Education Partnership has gone out of business and not in a graceful



way. Whoever was responsible for their money apparently co-mingled scholarship donations with grant money and operating funds. When they ran out of operating funds, it is alleged that they used scholarship money and perhaps grants to pay for operations. Then, they almost ran out of money altogether. The Partnership appeared to have as its sole mission the dissolution of teachers' unions and attracted corporate money from RI to support its cause. The decisionmakers in these corporations now have egg on their faces and we are still standing.

The RIFTHP came within 1.8% of putting Charlie Fogarty into the State House. But while almost doesn't count, we did put Sheldon Whitehouse over the top in his Senate bid to help build the Democrat majority in the US Senate.

We organized the adjunct professors at Rhode Island College with about 158 vot-

ing for the union and only 3 votes against. Their first contract is being negotiated by a team of adjuncts and Mike Mullane of the RIFTHP staff. The progress is slow, but there is progress.

There were mixed results at the '08 General Assembly. The RIFTHP's Past Practice Bill, giving public employees the right to arbitrate past practices passed, was vetoed and then the veto was overridden by the Assembly. We prevented pension reductions and contribution increases, but we now can no longer negotiate the name of the health care insurer in our contracts. We won the issue on the floor with an amendment introduced by Rep. Steven Ucci. The amendment called for bids on health care coverage. It passed, but during the dinner break during budget considerations, the House leadership pressured legislators to change their votes, and we lost on a motion to reconsider by 6 votes.

Our engagement with the AFT has increased dramatically. I have been appointed to the AFT's Executive Committee.

There have been several appointments to AFT Committees. Jason Blank has been reappointed to the Planning and Policy Council (PPC) for Higher Education.

(The PPCs make recommendations to the Executive Council for programs and policies.) Rob Bower has been reappointed to the Public Employee PPC, and I have been reappointed to the Pre K-12 PPC and to the AFT's Organizing Committee.

Diane Tourangeau has been appointed to the Early Childhood Cadre, Janice Mesolello, Colleen Callahan and Lauren Hopkins to the Adolescent Literacy Cadre and Mary Ann McComiskey and Colleen to the Response to Intervention Cadre.

The AFT has given the RIFTHP a couple of grants to help us with our political program and with professional development. The Federation has been fortunate to have Paula Caiozzo, a retiree from Cranston, working on our get-out-the-vote drive for the Hillary Clinton Primary and segueing into the Obama campaign. Coming on for Obama were Pawtucket retirees Joyce Mullen and Carol Keiser. They also worked on our General Assembly and federal races.

Outcome of races

We were very successful on electing our candidates for the US Senate, US House of Representatives and to the RI General Assembly.

Senator Jack Reed and Congressmen Patrick Kennedy and Jim Langevin won resoundingly in their bids for re-election.

We were also very successful in electing our endorsed candidates in the primaries and general elections for the General Assem

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bly. In the primaries, we endorsed 19 candidates. All but two were elected. In the general election we won all but four of our 53 endorsed candidates.

We enjoyed the benefit of hundreds of volunteers who wrote postcards and made phone calls to our members reminding them of our endorsements and the reasons for the endorsements.

We are indebted to our volunteers. The success of our union, local, state and national, depends upon our members engaging in our unions' programs. We are a collective organization and our strength lies in collective activity.

The AFT has given us a small grant to begin a Union Learn pilot program. We are one of three grantees in the country and the only state federation to develop a workplace pilot program with a Union Learn Representative. The ULR will survey and assess the professional development needs of members, and with their local and our state federation will refer or broker opportunities for members to acquire new skills and knowledge.

This year the Federation and our locals ran an unprecedented campaign to forestall bills at the Assembly to change our pension benefits and narrow our rights to bargain. We were successful with pensions but did have our right to name insurers in contracts taken away.

We started with a retreat of all our leaders of public

employee unions meeting to develop a campaign plan and timeline. We kicked off the Keep the Promise campaign with a dinner meeting of all public employee building and site representatives in March. We previewed what we expected to happen at the Assembly and enlisted their support in working with their colleagues to help defeat bad proposals. And, unfortunately, we expect the same bad proposals again, only with more urgency because of the economy.

On pensions

There is a House Commission that has met several times and has engaged the State's actuary to cost out how much money the State would save under different scenarios. The first would be to move all Tier A members into Tier B. (Readers who want to know the differences between the two tiers should call me at 273-9800.) The second would move members with less than 25 years of service into Tier B. The third would create a hybrid plan with a small defined benefit in combination with a 401K-type plan. Then, there's the scenario on many variations of changing the COLA.

On collective bargaining

We expect legislation that would take away our right to bargain seniority, transfers, class size, health care and evaluation, at the least.

In the campaign that we ran this year, we wrote letters to the members of the Assembly, had after-school cell phone parties and wrote e-mails. Teachers ran meetings

in their homes with members and legislators from the House so that there could be a face-to-face opportunity for members to express their concerns as constituents. We had four lobby days where members came to the Assembly to meet with their representatives. Leaders and members attended the Pension Commission meetings. The culmination was a rally with about 1,500 RIFTHP members and another 1,500 other public employee union members in attendance at the State House. When the Assembly session was over, members wrote or called members of the Assembly to say thank you or express concern.

It is not only important to talk to legislators about what we are concerned about but to also let them know that we are watching how they vote.

With all that work having been done, I'm sure that repeating this program alone will not be sufficient to stave off bad things from happening in the next session. We have to repeat ourselves but we also have to top ourselves. And somehow we will.

It is no secret that the State is running a huge deficit and that the cost to the State to maintain our pensions is expensive. The pressure to reduce our pension benefits to save the State money will be very high. The pressure that the Assembly feels to keep our benefits the same must be higher. Without the pressure being higher, the weaker side will give. We don't want the weaker side to be us. And so, we must bring great pres-

sure to bear to keep our benefits.

And to make us all feel proud, the generosity of RIFTHP members is unbounded. When Coventry teacher Marc Blevins suggested that we collect donations of materials and supplies to send to New Orleans teachers for their students, local leaders stepped up to the plate and asked members to run outreach in the schools for donations. Between collections at locals and materials collected at the Convention, over 100 boxes of school supplies will be sent to teachers in New Orleans for their students and special thanks to our nurses for their help. Paul Arpin Van Lines is providing transport of the materials to New Orleans for free. Also, our thanks are extended to Jim Roston who picked up boxes from locals and the Federation and is storing them for us until transport is available.

So while 2008 has been something of a mixed bag of the good and the bad, it was mostly the good that surfaced. What 2009 will bring will depend on how hard we work together with an added pinch of luck.

For those of you who have inquired, the indoor cats are fine. One of the outdoor cats, Cookie, passed on this summer. He had a very good life and his purr let us know that he appreciated every minute of it.

Marcia B. Reback

The Convention at a Glance...



AFT President Emeritus Ed McElroy delivers keynote address on unions and politics.

On right: Coventry Local member Joe Fagnoli nominates Kelly Erinakes for Vice-President.



Woonsocket Teachers' Guild President Richard DiPardo moves Patrick Kennedy's endorsement.



On left: President Marcia Reback congratulates Rep. Jim Langevin on his RIFTHP endorsement.



Delegates listen to Rep. Langevin's predictions about Congress's agenda under President-Elect Barack Obama.



Marcia Reback is elected to her 9th term as RIFTHP President.



Pawtucket Teachers' Alliance President Charleen Christy nominates Ron Beaupre for Assistant Treasurer.



In her 41st year of teaching, Merle Dresner, Credentials Committee Chair, offers her report to delegates.



Coventry Teachers' Alliance President Kelly Erinakes speaks to the RIFTHP resolution calling for competitive pay for nurse educators.



Sean Doyle of the West Warwick Teachers' Alliance won one of 12 RIFTHP Outstanding Service Awards.

RIFTHP Thinking Math Institute Huge Success

On August 7 and 8, the RIFTHP hosted a very successful Thinking Mathematics Institute, attended by 150 teachers from across Rhode Island. Teachers from all grade levels attended this two-day event and met in both cross grade level and grade specific groups to learn strategies and share best practices that are all based on the AFT/RIFTHP's successful Thinking Mathematics program and specially designed to address RI's GLEs and GSEs and strengthen mathematics instruction.

Disappointed with performance on last year's state assessment scores in mathematics, educators across Rhode Island are searching for strategies to help students strengthen their mathematics' understanding and skill. Recognizing that much work needs to be done at the district level to align curriculum and instruction to the GLEs and GSEs in order for teachers to have the tools they need to close gaps in students' mathematical achievement, the Institute provided another opportunity for the state federation to meet the professional development needs of its members.

RIFTHP nationally-trained instructors worked for months to prepare hands-on sessions that brought together the research on best practice in mathematics, a focus on the expectations of

statewide assessment and strategies that could be incorporated into our classrooms this fall.

Conference evaluations were overwhelmingly positive and underscored the need for more sessions like this.

Look for information about RIFTHP Thinking Math I, II and Thinking Math Algebra courses that will be offered in January as part of the union's commitment to follow up on the success of this summer's Math Institute.



Teachers from all grade levels were actively involved in trying strategies designed to engage students in rigorous Mathematics.

SAVE THE DATE

QuEST '09

November 6 & 7

Rhode Island Convention Center

This popular RIFTHP professional issues conference attracted over 900 participants, a record number for this event, and evaluations reinforced the value of the professional development provided at QuEST for our members and guests.

Save the date now and look for more information on QuEST '09 in the spring.

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rights to retirement, due process and tenure, and prevailing wages that all other charter school teachers enjoy. The legislation would also prohibit out-of-state operators from coming into RI to operate charter schools;

- ◆ Support forgivable scholarships for people completing nursing programs and making the salaries of nurse educators competitive;

- ◆ Hold state legislators accountable who vote to decrease pension benefits in the next session of the General Assembly by withholding financial support and endorsements in the 2010 elections;

- ◆ Support legislation to provide rights to adjunct professors to pensions and job security and to seek ratios of full-time tenured and tenure-track faculty to adjuncts. In some public institutions more courses are taught by part-time teachers than by full-time faculty;

- ◆ Lobby our Congressional delegation to support deductions from retiree pensions for health care to be considered pre-tax dollars;

- ◆ Thank John Najarian for his years of service as a leader at Rhode Island College; and

- ◆ Congratulate and wish good fortune to Nancy Carriuolo who is the new President of RIC.

The Convention ended with the presentation of Union Service Awards to recipients highlighted in the box on the right.

Outstanding Service Recipients 2008

<i>Ron Beaupre</i>	<i>Pawtucket Teachers' Alliance</i>
<i>Richard DiPardo</i>	<i>Woonsocket Teachers' Guild</i>
<i>Marianne Davidson</i>	<i>Providence Teachers Union</i>
<i>Sean Doyle</i>	<i>W. Warwick Teachers' Alliance</i>
<i>Janet Labrecque</i>	<i>Howard Union of Teachers</i>
<i>Roberta DeAndrade</i>	<i>Lincoln Teachers' Association</i>
<i>Jean Picano</i>	<i>Johnston Federation of Teachers</i>
<i>Kathleen Torregrossa</i>	<i>Cranston Teachers' Alliance</i>
<i>Sam Mirmirani</i>	<i>Bryant Faculty Federation</i>
<i>Carol Shelton</i>	<i>Rhode Island College/AFT</i>
<i>Carol Keiser</i>	<i>RIAFT/Retirees</i>
<i>Francis Casey</i>	<i>Northern RI Collaborative Employees' Union</i>

RIFTHP Winter / Spring Courses to Include Option for PD Hours

This January, the RIFTHP will once again offer its three-credit graduate courses in Reading and Math through its partnership with URI. In response to requests from the field, the course will offer a new option - PD hours. Participants registering for courses will be able to choose either the three graduate credit option at the greatly discounted price of \$550 or take the same course for forty RIDE Professional Development Credits for \$250. This option is being provided in response to the great number of requests we have received

for professional development designed to help members meet their I-PLAN or other recertification goals.

January courses will include Thinking Math I and II, Thinking Math Algebra, Elementary Reading Comprehension, Secondary Reading Comprehension and Beginning Reading. Classes will be offered at various locations around the State and will begin in mid-January.

Look for registration information in the mail and at rifthp.org.

**RI Federation of Teachers
& Health Professionals**

Marcia B. Reback, *President*

**Robert E. Casey
*Field Representative***

**Michael Mullane
*Field Representative***

**James Parisi
*Field Representative***

**Colleen Callahan
*Director of Professional Issues***

**Maureen Martin
*Director of Political Activities***

**Diane Thurber
*Executive Assistant***

**Carol Santangini
*Staff Assistant***

**Charlene Lee
*Administrative Assistant***

**Kenn Fontaine
*Administrative Assistant***



Happy Holidays