

UUPers help push endorsed candidates to victory

UUP members across the state enthusiastically staffed phone banks in the days prior to Election Day, rallying fellow UUPers and NYSUT members to not only vote, but also to support union-endorsed candidates. Their work helped change the balance of power in Washington, as Democrats regained control of Congress for the first time in 12 years.

"It's important we provide effective new leadership in Congress," the UUPers said as they donned headsets to call their fellow unionists.

New Paltz Chapter President and SUNY Outreach Committee Chair Glenn McNitt pitched in as one of four faculty members from New Paltz as they called more than 300 NYSUT members from the union's regional office in Kingston.

"There's no indecision among our membership. They knew they were voting and who they were voting for," McNitt said as he and three colleagues reminded callers which candidates had been endorsed and deserved their vote. That list included Congressional challengers Kirsten Gillibrand, John Hall and Michael Arcuri, plus



UUPer Dave Peckham of Upstate Medical University works the phones on behalf of union-backed candidates in the Syracuse area.

—Photo by Kevin Rivoli

incumbents Maurice Hinchey and Mike McNulty, all of whom won election.

About two dozen UUPers from Stony Brook and Stony Brook HSC contacted nearly 1,300 NYSUT members during four evenings of calling from NYSUT's regional offices in Suffolk

and Nassau counties. Congressional hopeful David Mejias and state Sen. John Flanagan headed their list of endorsed candidates. Flanagan waltzed to re-election.

"Our budgets depend on who is in office," said Charles McAteer, a UUP delegate from Stony Brook who helped to coordinate the phone bank. "Our members were listening and wanted to vote to protect higher education and health care."

Thirteen UUPers from Upstate Medical University, Oswego, Cortland and Canton staffed the phones over the course of two nights last week, calling hundreds of NYSUT members from the union's regional office in East Syracuse. They rallied support for state Sen. David Valesky, who won re-election, and Congressional challenger Dan Maffei, among others.

The spirit of activism extended to the north, as three members from Canton, led by Chapter President Dave Butler, called about 200 unionists from NYSUT's regional office in Potsdam.

NYSUT's endorsed candidates for statewide office made a clean sweep: Eliot Spitzer won the governor's race, Andrew Cuomo will be the new attorney general, and U.S. Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton and Comptroller Alan Hevesi were re-elected.

Chapter visits wrap up with great results

The two-month round of visits to UUP chapters is drawing to a close.

With the completion of the campus-by-campus "Listening Tour," scheduled for Nov. 16 in Buffalo, the Negotiations Team is looking ahead to the exchange of proposals with the state. That's likely to take place in early 2007.

Members still have several avenues open for communicating their concerns and questions about the negotiations process, noted UUP Vice President for Academics and Chief Negotiator Fred Floss.

They can fill out a negotiations survey, which is available on the UUP Web site at www.uupinfo.org. (The deadline is Friday,

Nov. 10, and it's possible to still meet that deadline by filing online.) They can speak to their chapter representatives on the Negotiations *Ad Hoc* Advisory Committee. Or, they can speak at a hearing at the upcoming Winter 2007 DA, Feb. 9-10.

"More than 1,000 members turned out for chapter visits, and their input will be extremely helpful to us as we sit down and prepare for the next phase of this process," Floss said. "We want to thank every member who came to a chapter visit, filled out a survey, or spoke to an *Ad Hoc* Advisory Committee member. We value their time and their concern."

Thousands more have also weighed in via the negotiations survey and member suggestion forms, Floss said.

Reminders/Upcoming meetings

November

- 17-19—AFT Special Leadership Conference, Washington, D.C.
- 23-24—UUP office closed for Thanksgiving
- 27—Negotiations Team visit to Brockport
- 30—EOC Concerns Committee Meeting
UUP Conference Room

December

- 1—Executive Board meeting
- 1—Task Force on Academic Member Recruitment, NYSUT Conf. Rm.
- 8-10—Negotiations Comm./Team Retreat, Lake George
- 22-Jan. 1—UUP and NYSUT offices closed

(excerpts of selected newsclips)

Nov. 6

The Legislative Gazette — **SUNY Albany wins voter registration contest**

The SUNY Voter Empowerment Challenge, a non partisan voter registration drive, registered more than 11,000 students to vote in this week's election.

Each of the 64 SUNY campuses competed to register the most students between Sept. 11 and Oct. 6, with SUNY Albany coming out on top by registering more than 2,500 students.

The SUNY College of Optometry registered the highest percentage of its students, signing up almost 35% of its 292 students.

Several other SUNY campuses contributed largely to the grand total of new voters, including Buffalo State with more than 1,500 students, Stony Brook with nearly 1,300 and New Paltz, last year's challenge winner, with close to 1,200.

"It's incredibly important for students to be involved and to vote because these are the people who will be making decisions for them on a lot of issues such as higher education and health care, so it's really important that their voices be heard and their issues be paid attention to," said Alex Hanson, project coordinator for NYPIRG's SUNY Albany Office.

UUP, NYPIRG, NYSUT, the SUNY Student Assembly and Rock the Vote! all participated in sponsoring this drive and registering new voters.

SUNY Albany will host a special concert for the students' efforts and success in winning this challenge. The performer has not yet been announced.

SUNY Optometry will be honored with a ceremony and a plaque.

"It's important for all adults to vote in the election, but it's particularly important for young people to show that they're interested in their future," said Blair Horner, legislative director for NYPIRG.

Nov. 1

The New York Times — **College aid cutbacks**

Pell Grants are one of the largest sources of federal help for low-income college students, and the most valuable form of aid, because the money doesn't have to be paid back. But the level of aid is increasingly out of sync with the level of need.

Last week, the College Board reported that Pell Grants fell last year, for the first time in six years. The cuts were about \$100 a year per recipient, on average, and came on top of other miserliness. It's been four years since Congress last increased the maximum annual Pell Grant—by a mere \$50—bringing the top grant for a student who has no parental support to \$4,050. Meanwhile, college costs are up 35% from five years ago. Tuition and fees at a typical four-year public university are closing in on \$6,000 this year.

The recent cutbacks were set in motion in 2004, when the Department of Education reduced the number of students deemed eligible for Pell Grants and the amounts they were qualified to receive. Pell Grants now cover about a third of the average costs at a four-year public school, compared with 42%

five years ago.

Bush administration officials have said repeatedly that the solution to the nation's growing income inequality is more education. That's a gross oversimplification, but if they really believed it—and cared about a remedy—would federal college aid be declining? As things stand, privatization of college lending is the administration goal that is being advanced. As government aid has declined, loans from banks and other private lenders have soared, climbing to 20% of all education borrowing last year, up from 12% five years earlier.

The result is towering debt. The same bachelor's degree will cost a student borrower far more than a student who can afford to pay. That's not a path to greater equality.

Oct. 30

Newsday — **Tuition tax break pushed**

Sen. Charles Schumer yesterday called for restoring a tax break to help pay for rising tuition at both private and public colleges across New York.

Schumer (D-N.Y.) said the tuition tax break, which began in 2001 but was not extended this year, allowed middle income families to write off up to \$4,000 of tuition on their taxes.

Schumer discussed the issue and released a report on tuition at a news conference at St. Peters College in Jersey City, N.J., accompanied by Sen. Bob Menendez (D-N.J.).

Both men vowed to push Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist, a Republican, to bring the issue back onto the agenda.

Schumer said families across New York rely on the tax break to help pay for college tuition, which jumped an average of 22% at public and private schools between the 2000-01 school year and the 2004-05 school year, according to his and Menendez's report.

"To hard-working New York parents, skyrocketing tuition costs mean debt and second mortgages," Schumer said. "They mean lost family vacations and hard choices about how many children can be sent to school. The college tuition tax deduction makes these choices a little easier by saving families thousands of dollars every year."

Under the law passed in 2001, families could deduct up to \$4,000 on their tax returns based on their income. The measure expired in May.

In New York City, where the cost of attending college rose by an average of 31% in the last five years, 95,013 families used the tax break in 2003. On Long Island, where average tuition costs increased by 27% over the same period, according to the report, 34,746 families used the tax credit.

Nationwide, the tax break saved 3.6 million people a total of \$4.5 billion, Schumer said.

Schumer's study showed that in New York, the cost at public four-year colleges, including tuition, fees, and room and board, went from \$10,254 to \$12,441 between 2001 and 2005. At private institutions, the average cost went from \$25,171 to \$30,907.

Oct. 26

THE CHRONICLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION — **AAUP report blames colleges for gender inequity among professors**

The American Association of University Professors released a report last week that establishes four indicators of "gender equity" within the professoriate, and offers a listing of how 1,445 colleges and universities measure up.

The report, called "AAUP Faculty Gender Equity Indicators 2006," marks the first time that a detailed breakdown of the nation's professoriate by gender has been released for such a large group of higher education institutions, says Martha S. West, a professor of law at the University of California at Davis who helped write the report. The issue at the heart of the report has been much discussed in academe: Women still represent a distinct minority of tenured and tenure-track faculty members, despite the fact that among American citizens, women are earning more than half of all Ph.D.s conferred.

The AAUP does not offer any new arguments about why women are not being hired by academe at the rate they are earning doctoral degrees, nor does it propose novel solutions. But it does take a particularly hard line, blaming the institutions for the "accumulated disadvantages" it says women face in academe, and holding individual colleges accountable.

"Women face more obstacles as faculty in higher education than they do as managers and directors in corporate America," according to the report. Women have not been "welcomed into the faculty ranks," says the report, and they confront an "inequitable hurdle" when it comes time to apply for tenure. If higher education continues hiring, offering tenure, and paying women at the same rate it does now, says the report, it will take decades for women to "reach parity."

The report says campuses can measure gender equity by looking at these indicators:

- The proportion of full-time faculty members who are female. Nationally, the report says, women constituted just 39% of full-time professors in the 2005-06 academic year, while making up 48% of the part-timers. The situation represents an inequity, the report says, because part-time positions typically pay less and have little job security.

- The percentage of women within the tenured and tenure-track ranks. Women, it says, held 44.8% of tenure-track positions in 2005-06, and only 31% of the tenured positions.

- The proportion of women who are full professors. The report says that at all types of institutions in 2005-06, women held on average just 24% of full professorships.

- The average salary of female faculty members compared with males. In 2005-06, says the report, female professors earned on average just 81% of what men earned.