

# NEGOTIATIONS 2007

I hope all our members had a restful and exciting holiday break. 2007 promises to be an exciting if not tense filled year. With the Senate proposal on consolidating districts, the idiotic idea of a "Super" superintendent, the budget "crisis and our own contract negotiations we are in for a roller coaster ride. Fear not, your Association is hard at work keeping on top of things. This issue will feature a Government Relations column to keep you informed of what is happening in our state as it relates to education and how you can help protect your post retirement benefits. As your membership chairperson, I would like to remind all our members if you have

changed your name or have moved, please go to [www.njea.org](http://www.njea.org) and login using your pin number that appears on your NJEA membership card and change your information. If you would prefer that I do it for you, just email me the information at [ygutierrez@prodigy.net](mailto:ygutierrez@prodigy.net) and put VEA in the subject heading and I will take care of it. I would like to welcome any new members into the family and remember if you have any questions and/or concerns please seek out your building rep or contact me. There are no stupid questions only the ones you don't ask.

Yolanda Gutierrez,  
Membership Chairperson  
Lamplighter Editor



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**Points of Interest:**

- Visit [njea.org](http://njea.org) and update your membership information.
- Fill out the negotiations survey! We would like all of them returned so that we can represent the needs of all members.
- If interested in getting more involved in the Association, see your building Rep.(s) or contact Yolanda Gutierrez at [ygutierrez@prodigy.net](mailto:ygutierrez@prodigy.net). Put "VEA" as the subject.
- Do you know who your Reps. are?

## NEGOTIATIONS SURVEY

You will be receiving the Negotiations survey shortly. Please make sure that you fill it out carefully and write any issues or concerns you would like us to be aware of and or address at negotiations. The team will read each

and every comment on the surveys and they do take your concerns seriously, however not every issue is negotiable. During negotiations it is important that our members do not go about speculating what is occurring at the table. Your president will issue a nego-

tiation update to all the members via the Association's website: [www.vinelandea.org](http://www.vinelandea.org). It is counter productive when our members start rumors or tell board members what would be a fair deal for the entire membership. Your negotiation team has representatives in each of the areas so that everyone's interest is represented.

## LEGISLATIVE NEWS BY LOUIS RUSSO

The Assembly passed a bill (A-1) that places a cap on municipal and school tax levies. There is serious fear that this could result in staff and program cuts as well as disrupt contract negotiations. Cyber-lobby at: [http://capwiz.com/nea/nj/issues/alert/?alertid=9295636&type=ML&show\\_alert=1](http://capwiz.com/nea/nj/issues/alert/?alertid=9295636&type=ML&show_alert=1)

## MEMORANDUM

FROM: Joyce Powell , Robert Bonazzi , Ginger Gold Schnitzer

RE: A-1

Over vigorous NJEA lobbying in opposition to A-1, the Assembly yesterday passed this legislation, which establishes homestead credits to reduce property taxes and imposes a four percent cap on local tax levies. This afternoon, Assembly Republicans held a surprise news conference to say their lawyers had found the bill to be unconstitutional under the Uniformity Clause. That clause requires all property to be taxed at the same rate, regardless of the owners' characteristics. They urged Democrats to "fix" the bill now to give everyone the same level of tax relief or seek a constitutional amendment in November. As of now, the bill is scheduled to go to the Senate for consideration on February 5. NJEA will hold a Lobby Day on February 5 and encourages all members who can attend to do so. The combined efforts of leaders, members, and staff have been extraordinarily successful in stopping almost all of the 98 recommendations of the Special Legislative Session. Our lobbying and organizing efforts have stopped an unprecedented avalanche of bills that would have done great harm to public education, its students, and employees. While we were not able to defeat A-1, we were successful in gaining important provisions and exemptions. We are analyzing how this legislation would impact our districts and will have that information in the future. However, knowing you will be hearing about the bill in the media, we want to give you the following highlights of the bill:

- **Districts can exempt some of the increases in health care costs.** Specifically, districts can exempt the difference between four percent and the average increase in State Health Benefits Plan (SHBP). In other words, districts can exempt costs over four percent and up to the average increase in the SHBP. This is a critical exemption for two reasons: First, it provides an incentive for districts that left the state plan (often because they have a large number of low-risk employees) to go back into the SHBP. As low-risk-employee districts return to the SHBP, it lowers the cost of the SHBP. Second, this exemption will help replace a temporary waiver for increases in health insurance which started in 2003 and is due to expire this year.
- Districts can exempt all enrollment increases over four percent and partial enrollment increases under four percent. Districts can exempt any reduction in state aid from the previous year. This may be particularly important when the state implements a new funding formula. If a district were to lose money under a new funding formula, it could exempt the difference from the four percent cap. In addition to those statutory exemptions, the bill also allows districts to ask the commissioner to waive the following costs beginning next year:
  - special education costs above \$40,000 per pupil
  - tuition increases for sending and receiving districts
  - opening a new school
  - insurance costs such as workers comp, life, and property
  - capital outlay expenses
- new educational programs and services if districts fail to meet NCLB standards (to be replaced by QSAC standards when they are in place).

Beginning in 2008-2009, districts will also be able to seek a waiver from the commissioner for transportation (courtesy busing) and extraordinary energy costs. NJEA was also able to ensure that the bill allows districts, without getting approval from the Commissioner of Education, to create three "reserve funds" for various purposes, including paying for health insurance and emergencies. Moreover, the legislation allows districts to maintain a larger surplus of two percent or \$250,000, as opposed to the lower current level of two percent or \$100,000.

Again, these victories were possible because your efforts, talents, and commitment enable our Association to organize and lobby in ways that are the envy of every organization in the state. We thank you for the sacrifices you have made. They have made all the difference. As always, stay tuned for new developments!

# HAVE YOU READ YOUR CONTRACT LATELY?

All members need to find time and read their contract. The most disheartening thing for me to hear is when a member gets in trouble and says "I didn't know that!" or "Who has time to read the contract?" Make time, because administration isn't going to buy either excuse.



*Knowing your Contract gives you superpowers!*

Let's look at sick days and personal/temporary leave days.

## Article 15

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### SICK LEAVE

- A. Teachers who are steadily employed by the Board of Education and who are absent because of **personal illness** or quarantine shall be allowed sick leave with full pay for a minimum of thirteen (13) days in any school year. If any such teacher requires in any school year less than the specified number of sick leave with pay allowed, all days of such sick leave not utilized shall be accumulative to be used for additional sick leave as needed in subsequent years.
- B. In the event that a tenured teacher shall have exhausted the specified annual and accumulative sick leave days because of extended illness or

quarantine, such teacher may be granted in any school year additional sick leave with adjusted salary payment for each day of such absence. Such cases shall be considered on an individual basis. The adjusted salary payment shall be on the basis of one-two hundredth of the teacher's annual salary minus the daily pay of a substitute teacher.

## Article 16

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### TEMPORARY LEAVES OF ABSENCE AND PERSONAL LEAVE DAYS

- A. Teachers and twelve (12) month secretaries shall have five (5) days per year, which they may use for temporary and/or personal leave; ten (10) month secretaries shall have four (4) days per year, which they may use for temporary and/or personal leave. Temporary and/or personal leave days shall not be requested after

*When in doubt, ask. The only dumb question is the one not asked...*

June 1 of the school year, except for a bona fide reason. Approval of any bona fide request after June 1 shall not be unreasonably withheld.

- B. Personal days shall be used for matters of such pressing importance that can only be performed during school hours. The use of personal days for **non-emergency** matters shall be preceded by seven (7) days written notice to the employee's principal or immediate supervisor and sent to the Director of Human Resources for approval. For two (2) of the five (5) days, the reason for the requested use of personal days must be specified on the written notice. Advance seven (7) days written notice shall be waived by the Director of Human Resources upon receipt of **documented** verification of the emergent circumstances. Approval shall not be unreasonably withheld. No more than three (3) consecutive personal days shall be approved, except in the case of death of an immediate family member, or with approval of the Director of Human Resources. Personal days may not be used the

last work day before or the first work day after a holiday and/or scheduled closing day. Teachers may not use personal leave days on those days scheduled for in-service, training, workshops or other professional development under article 8.A.

So what does it all mean? Sick days are to be used when YOU are sick or have a doctor's appointment for yourself. It is **ILLEGAL** to use your sick days for your children's or anyone else's illness. Doing so is considered theft of services. You have 5 personal/temporary leave days that can be used for illness in the family. When you have a reason such as family illness, home emergency, death etc, you do not need 7 days notice. The only time you need seven days is for your no reason days and things you know in advance, like a wedding. You can not take no reason personal days after June 1, before and after a holiday/schedule closing, or in-service day. Protect yourself by always having documentation for your days, be it a doctor's note, legal letter, bill of services etc. You can use all 5 days with a reason, its only when you go with no-reason that you're limited to 3 days. Any unused personal days get rolled over into sick days for the next year.

## I DIDN'T KNOW THAT!

The following questions have been asked by members.

My senior building rep wants me to be a Rep. What does the job entail?

As an **A/R (Association Representative)** or **Building Rep** your job is as simple or as hard as you make it. Your main responsibilities is to keep the members in your building informed of what is going on in the district as it relates to the association. You are also a liaison between your members and the school building administrator when appropriate. Take pride in your position and do not think for one moment that all you are is a mailbox stuffer. Some of the things that you may find yourself doing is helping a member write a rebuttal to their evaluation or sit in on a meeting between a member and an administrator and take notes to what occurs in that meeting. Signing up new members and helping them fill out the form and answering their questions. Every rep should have with them a copy of their contract and be well

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## I DIDN'T KNOW THAT!

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versed on its contents. Every building rep must remember that when you meet with an administrator on association business you are on equal grounds with that individual. You are never alone in your role as a building rep. You have the local leadership to help and guide you and step in when it is something beyond your role as a rep.

What's the difference between being just a rep and a senior rep?

First of all no one is just a rep. Both have the same responsibilities mentioned above. The senior rep in general has more experience or knowledge of the contract. The senior reps are the ones that the Leadership would depend on to get the information out to the rest of the reps in case of a crisis.

What is my role as a Member of the VEA?

This is an interesting question since it segues into the belief that the leadership and the reps are the union. YOU are the VEA, the CCCEA, NJEA, and the NEA. The association is its members. Your role is to stay informed and become involved and not only when there is a bargaining crisis. The association is only as strong as its weakest link, a cliché yes, but very true. Know your contract and exercise your rights. Remember that the contract is an agreement between the School Board and the Association, it is not a one sided document. Each sides interest are equally represented and after much debate and give and take an agreement was reached. Neither the administration or you have the right to diminish that agreement.

**With teamwork all things  
are possible.**



### Who are my building Reps?

#### Administration

Marion Ostrowski  
Celestine Pollock

#### Coney Avenue

Henry Weintraub

#### Adult Ed. Center

Brenda Cucukov

#### Alternative

Cindi Panas

#### East Vineland

Carol Rush  
Theodore Prohovich

#### South Vineland

Barbara Cline

#### Impact

Pauletta Berger  
Adrienne Possenti

#### Success

Mary Burgents

#### Barse

Michelle Pantalione

Peter Moniodis

Linda Fields

#### Cunningham School

Valerie Carbonara  
Megan Richmond  
Daisy Mercado

#### D'Ippolito

Roxanne Derenzis  
Dalia Sollenberger

#### Durand

Brandy Patch  
Jim Appleby  
Rita Myers  
Christine Beecher

#### Johnstone

Gloria Graff  
Shirley Santos

#### Mennies

Robin Cohen  
Lilia Beneat  
Carmen Ruiz-Mesa

#### Petway

Andi Dunlap-Vastano  
Regina Merkel

Shari Testa

#### Winslow

Melissa Mendez  
Michael Hindermyer

Susan Lucas

#### Fels 2nd Chance

Shirely Stewart

#### Rossi

Larry Berger  
Gina Merlino  
Pam English  
Mary Kaskabas

#### Landis

Donna Grasso  
Lisa Davis  
Brenda Nichols

Carolyn Lanzi

#### Leuchter

Carmi Brooks

#### Memorial

Lisa Wren  
Mark Melamed  
Sue LaTorre

#### Wallace

Glenn Muller  
Stephen Slavoff  
Maureen Hibbs  
Valerie Weeks

#### VHS 9-10

Ron Cropper  
Lisa Hoganson  
Andy Browne  
Patrica Grablow  
Judy Feinstein

Christine Baker  
Rebekah Masters  
Mary Lundberg

#### VHS 11-12

Ryan Handy  
Lou Russo  
Mary Beth Banko  
Charles Sheftall  
Hillary Scull  
Gina D'Arcangelo

Jeff Munsick  
Will Turner

**Your Officers are in the Following Buildings:**

#### Rossi

*President*

Sal Emburgia

*Vice-President*

Angela Calakos

#### VHS 11-12

*Treasurer*

Penny Moltane

#### Mennies

*Recording Secretary*

Rosa Mendez

#### Cunningham

*Corresponding Secretary*

Yolanda Gutierrez

\* denotes Senior Rep