



# SOMERS FACULTY ASSOCIATION

Political Action Report, October 2022  
NEW YORK STATE UNITED TEACHERS  
American Federation of Teachers, AFL-CIO 3013

## VOTE COPE COORDINATOR'S NOTE

Hi all,

I hope that you are enjoying the return of the Political Action Report, after a 2.5-year hiatus. I hope to continue sending monthly reports, in support of my efforts as the district-wide Vote COPE coordinator. We are only a few weeks away from election day, so you'll likely hear from me a few times between now and when the polls close, and then again once the NYS legislature returns to Albany in January.

I am excited to take on the role of Vote COPE coordinator, as it connects directly to the lobbying work that I have been doing on behalf of the SFA and NYSUT. VOTE-COPE is NYSUT's non-partisan action fund that coordinates the voluntary contributions of members and supports NYSUT-endorsed candidates and campaign committees that are pro-public-education and pro-labor. I have been support this effort by meeting regularly with state-level officials from the Assembly and the Senate, giving concrete examples of the challenges faced by our members. It makes sense to link our local political fundraising through Vote COPE with direct political activity, and I am happy to solidify this connection.

Please feel free to ask questions or to send along comments. If you are looking to get involved, please let me know and I'll get you door knocking, phone banking, or whatever you are comfortable with. And for those looking to start small, don't forget the [NYSUT Member Action Center](#). The impact of your voice, as one of the 600,000 members of NYSUT, really matters.

In solidarity,

Dean F. Schuler

## GOVERNOR HOCHUL SIGNS NYC CLASS-SIZE CAP BILL

New York Gov. Kathy Hochul signed a bill last month that will require New York City to reduce the class sizes, approving the measure in exchange for state lawmakers agreeing to delay it by a year. The class size bill requires the city to limit classes over the next five years to 20 students in kindergarten through third grade, 23 students for grades 4-8, and 25 students in high school.

"This bill reflects the need to ensure students have dedicated teachers devoting time and attention to their learning in person as we continue to come back from the COVID-19 pandemic," Hochul wrote in her approval message. [State lawmakers approved the bill in June](#) alongside an extension of mayoral control of the city school system. The five-year phase-in was originally supposed to begin this month.

## **STATE WAGE BOARD RECOMMENDS 40-HOUR WORK WEEK FOR FARMERS**

New York's Farm Laborer Wage Board, citing the industry's relatively low pay, long hours and harsh physical toll, prompted the panel to recommend that farm workers should be entitled to being paid overtime after working 40 hours a week like the rest of the workforce, according to a report released last month. "We believe this decision protects the rights of farm laborers while taking into account the needs of farmers," said board Chair Brenda McDuffie, former president of the Buffalo Urban League.

The majority of the three-member wage board found the farm industry's economic concerns are important but unpersuasive given actions lawmakers took in April. The board cited hefty tax credits that were approved by the Legislature this past budget cycle and which are intended to cover overtime costs in full. The majority of the wage board agreed to submit its report to state Department of Labor Commissioner Roberta Reardon. She has until Oct. 21 to decide on what to do regarding the state's overtime law for farm laborers.

The board's report recommends reaching a 40-hour minimum work week for farm laborers by 2032, a decade-long process. Every two years, the overtime threshold would be lowered by four hours per week. Currently, farm laborers are entitled to overtime for any work above 60 hours in a week. The 60-hour work week was established in 2020 after the passage of the Farm Laborers Fair Practices Act in 2019. Prior to the legislation, farm workers were not entitled to any overtime by law, a byproduct of a political compromise in federal legislation passed under the New Deal about a century ago that carved out farm workers from labor protections implemented for most of the workforce.

## **FRONTLINE EDUCATION SOFTWARE COMPANY SOLD TO ROPER TECHNOLOGIES**

Thoma Bravo, a leading software investment firm, announced last it has signed a definitive agreement to sell Frontline Education, our provider of administration software educators in K-12, to Roper Technologies, Inc. in an all-cash transaction that values Frontline at approximately \$3.725 billion. The transaction is expected to close in the fourth quarter, subject to regulatory approvals and customary closing conditions.

The exit follows a five-year partnership between Thoma Bravo and Frontline during which Thoma Bravo leveraged its specialized operating model and deep sector expertise to enable Frontline to drive profitable growth and expand its market leadership in the K-12 education sector.

## **A CYBER ATTACK HITS LA COUNTY SCHOOLS**

A [ransomware attack](#) targeting the huge Los Angeles school district prompted an unprecedented shutdown of its computer systems as schools increasingly find themselves vulnerable to cyber breaches at the start of a new year. The attack on the Los Angeles Unified School District sounded alarms across the country, from urgent talks with the White House and the National Security Council after the first signs of ransomware were discovered late on a Saturday night and mandated password changes for 540,000 students and 70,000 district employees.

Though the attack used technology that encrypts data and won't unlock it unless a ransom is paid, in this case the district's superintendent said no immediate demand for money was made and schools in the nation's second-largest district opened as scheduled. Such attacks have become a growing threat to U.S. schools, with several high-profile incidents reported since last year as pandemic-forced reliance on technology increases the impact. And ransomware gangs have in the past planned major attacks on U.S. holiday weekends, when they know IT staffing will be thin and security experts relaxing.

## **NYS BOARD OF REGENTS APPROVES NEW CURRICULUM RULES FOR PRIVATE SCHOOLS**

Last month, the Board of Regents [approved new regulations](#) that require private schools to prove they are teaching the same core subjects, in English, that public schools cover. The board voted unanimously and without debate. Every school must provide a “substantially equivalent” education in math, reading, writing, science and history. Schools can cover the topics in different ways – including integrating the curriculum into religious classes – but they must ensure students develop basic skills. Teachers must also be competent, though they do not have to be licensed by the state.

Some private schools have welcomed the rules. A spokesman for Catholic schools said the schools are ready to prove their education through state testing. Some schools are already accredited, another way of proving that they are providing a substantially equivalent education. Amish school operators have already been working with local school administrators to prove their students receive an acceptable education, according to the state Education Department. Approval through a local school district review is another way of meeting the state’s new regulation.

A group of ultra-Orthodox Jewish rabbis have announced they do not teach students the core classes required and that they will not do so. They threatened to take the issue to court, hoping to base their arguments on the precedent of the 1972 Supreme Court ruling. In 1972, the Supreme Court ruled in favor of the Amish, when they said their freedom of religious expression would be jeopardized by educating children beyond an eighth grade level. Rabbis said they hope to make similar arguments about the damage a secular education could have on the continued existence of their religious community. But the Amish defendants were able to prove they provided basic classes – mainly in reading, writing and arithmetic – and vocational training such that any child who chose to eventually leave their community would be able to support themselves with their skills. Supreme Court justices agreed and said that adding a couple more years of mandatory education – through age 16 – would not make a significant difference. To be decided is whether any secular education can be required by the state.

A recent New York Times investigation has found generations of children have been systematically denied a basic education, trapping many of them in a cycle of joblessness and dependency in certain Hasidic communities in New York City and the lower Hudson Valley. The schools appear to be operating in violation of state laws that guarantee children an adequate education. Even so, The Times found, the Hasidic boys’ schools have found ways of tapping into enormous sums of government money, collecting more than \$1 billion in the past four years alone.