

VOTE-COPE: THE BARE ESSENTIALS

VOTE - Voices Of Teachers for Education (NYSTA)

COPE - Committee On Political Education (UTNY)

1973 Merger of NYSTA and UTNY into NYSUT (VOTE-COPE)

- 1) Without money to lobby and support those legislators who vote on our agenda in Albany, we would lose every battle to the corporate interests who lobby against teachers and other public employees. All of our VOTE-COPE funds don't begin to compare to the private sector money used against us.
- 2) Right now there are the most powerful forces in history trying to remove tenure, reduce our pensions, eliminate our Triborough protections, reduce our salaries and benefits and slash aid to our public schools. We have no way to fight back other than with dollars we get from VOTE-COPE contributions. Our dues are not legally allowed to be used for political action purposes.
- 3) V-C dollars buy print, radio and TV ads, pay for phone banks and mailers, and allow us to make direct contributions to campaign committees. We support those (whether Democrat or Republican) who support our agenda of adequate funding for public education, health care, social security and other needs of working families. We look for those who support collective bargaining in NYS and all across America. We do not take positions in wars, gun control, abortion, the death penalty, stem cell research or other matters that our members may be passionate about and deal with through other organizations.
- 4) Teachers are shocked when they find out that Tiers III and IV, as enacted in 1976 and 1983, were absolutely horrible compared to the way they look today. Through the use of V-C dollars we have successfully lobbied for the past 30 years to eliminate the worst features of Tiers III and IV. Now it looks to us as though these tiers are fabulous. In fact, as originally enacted, no one in Tiers III and IV could retire until they were 62 regardless of how many years they had worked. With relentless lobbying we got that rolled back to age 55 for those with 30 years in teaching. Today, more than 80% of those teaching retire before they are 62. That would never have been possible without the enormous lobbying done to amend Tiers III and IV as originally enacted.
- 5) Did you know that Tiers III and IV, as written, had teachers paying 3% of their salaries for their entire careers? Through lobbying with VOTE-COPE dollars we stopped those contributions after just ten years. And there are legislators who would, if given the opportunity, have Tiers III and IV members with more than ten years' experience once again pay this 3%. It is absolutely incredible how much money this puts back in our pockets every year. Someone making \$70,000 saves \$2100 per year; at \$100,000 we save \$3000 per year. This giant victory alone should make teachers understand how tiny a gesture it is to contribute \$60, \$75 or \$100 per year to this vital fund that works for all of us. The money is needed to protect the hard-fought victories it took us so long to achieve and to preserve public education as we know it. If not us, who will fight this fight?
- 6) Our most recent challenges such as APPR and Common Core make it essential that we have NYSUT lobbyists working non-stop on our behalf. In addition, we have already begun the work of trying to remove or reduce some of the most onerous provisions of Tiers V and VI affecting our newest sisters and brothers.