



# Meeting with state governmental leaders in Albany

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# News Scope

MONROE COUNTY SCHOOL BOARDS ASSOCIATION  
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## Seminar guides prospective board candidates



ABOVE: Seminar presenters John Piper, Amy Thomas, Casey Kosiorek, Joseph Shileds, Esq., Sherry Johnson, and Beckie Schultz

The annual MCSBA seminar for prospective school board candidates, held on March 18, attracted 16 participants from within and around Monroe County. The session provided a three-hour overview of school board service, legal requirements for candidates, and campaign strategies. All those who attended were engaged with the presentations and asked thoughtful questions.

### Presenters included:

- \* John Piper (Pen), MCSBA President;
- \* Amy Thomas (Pit), Board of Education Vice President, who discussed what candidates should know about board membership;
- \* Casey Kosiorek (Hil), Superintendent, who shared how a district’s superintendent can help a candidate;
- \* Joseph Shields, Esq., School Attorney, Ferrara, Fiorenza PC, who reviewed legal requirements for school board candidates;
- \* MCSBA’s Sherry Johnson, Executive Director, and Beckie Schultz, Assistant to Executive Director, led a discussion of campaign strategies.

## From our president:

As this column was being authored in the last days of March, we found ourselves recovering from the Rochester version of March Mayhem. Wind, snow, and cold weather once again created the Rochester winter we all know and love. It is a not-so-subtle reminder that our school districts’ staffs are forever resilient in our attempts to keep children focused on the upcoming end of the school year.



John Piper

So it also is with our annual efforts with our legislators to prevent further March Mayhem for all of our school districts. All the players, our legislators, have shown their skill and expertise in presenting their case to the final four in Albany.

Winners and losers there will be, in many areas of education in New York State. That has usually been the norm. MCSBA has consistently been able to provide wins for our districts. This is a huge collaborative effort based solely on your involvement! As we know many pieces of proposed legislation may be sponsored by our legislators impacting our aid, mandates, and a variety of instructional issues.

I have read many pieces of submitted legislation relating to education this month, some very interesting and many that are disturbing to our efforts at educating the whole child. One bill that actually featured a healthy debate was simple in its nature: allow all school districts in New York State to give students a day off on St. Patrick’s Day. The bill, referred to the depths of an assembly committee, is unlikely to go anywhere, but this bill is an example that fits right in with the month’s mayhem theme. Its unlikely that an educator such as St. Patrick would have approved of this notion.

For many of us Albany watchers, this is the type of legislation that makes us wonder if we really don’t get it when it comes to advocating for positive legislative outcomes for our kids. Nonetheless we continue to take our message to our legislative delegation, not just during their March Mayhem, but continuously throughout the year. For us, it is about the relationships we have with our delegation and the sound factual and collaborative approach that we practice. Lawmakers trust that what we bring to the table is factual, genuine and always in the best interest of our children. We will always hold ourselves to that standard.

Its likely St. Patrick would approve of that!

*John Piper*

# From our executive director: Public education, the middle class, & our Constitutional values

Sometimes words are hard to come by. I find myself at one of those cross-roads; wanting to be inspirational but cognizant of the reality in which we find ourselves.

America is in a fitful place. Income inequality has once again challenged our constitution. Designed as a document to guarantee a place for everyone, it was purposely left without class distinctions. Our founding fathers, understanding the risks in doing so, expressed that as long as the Republic had a strong middle class, with few very rich and few very poor, our America would endure. We would have mobility and not nobility, democracy and not aristocracy, and we would avoid the pitfalls of storied governments that divided the classes and ultimately devolved into tyranny and revolution. However, those who proposed our unique design debated long and hard about the possibility that once we left our agrarian roots, that wealth would drive our political and economic determinations. James Madison lamented this and said that when the time came, “the institutions and laws of the Country must be adapted, and it will require for the task all of the wisdom of the wisest patriots.”

So, where does public education fit into our “middle class” constitution? The collapse of the middle class isn’t just economic and political; it is also a collapse of a value system. The French aristocrat Alexis de Tocqueville, who lived during the time our newly constructed constitution was put into place exclaimed, “The real advantage of democracy is not, as has been said, to favor the prosperity of all, but only to serve the well-being of the greatest number. The great advantage of the Americans is...to be born equal instead of becoming so.” We therefore, are exceptional because we work toward providing for the greater good, not because we grant exception to it. Public education provides precisely for that.



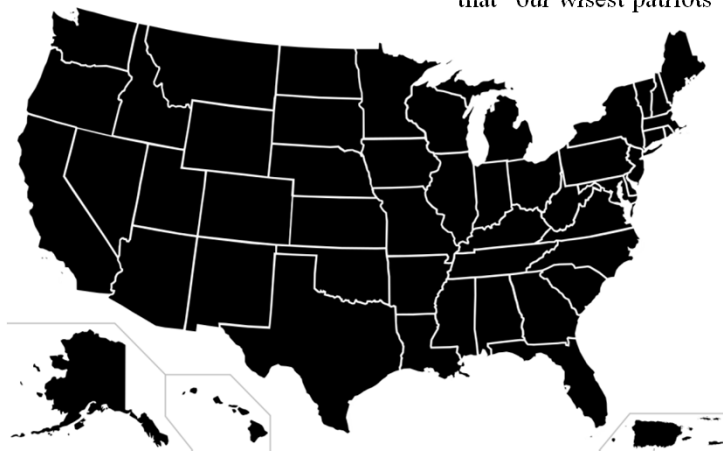
**Sherry Johnson**

In its role to meet the requisites needed to maintain a strong middle class, public education has changed over time. The Industrial Revolution moved our country from farming to manufacturing in a relatively short period of time by historical standards. Technology, innovation and globalization have moved us at an even faster pace. Regardless of the speed of change, the economy developed from these only remains strong as long as middle class America is well represented in the workforce and as a voice in government. These Americans, work together, recreate together and educate their children together. Public education, therefore, is a key component in keeping a strong middle class and ultimately our Republic viable.

*Fortune Magazine*, in 2015, described the United States as the richest and most unequal nation in the world. In a study of 55 countries, the United States topped the list with the highest wealth inequality at a whopping 80.56%. This is a measure (called a Gini Coefficient) of inequality in which 0% is perfect equality and 100% would mean perfect inequality, or one person owning all of the wealth. The wealthy now control our economy and our government and they are driving our education policy. They are declaring our education system as failing and setting up a replacement system under the guise of “choice”. We know that education vouchers and charter schools segregate our population, and we know that education tax credits primarily benefit those with resources and allow tax payer dollars to fund religious education. We know that none of these will effectively deconcentrate poverty or improve mobility, but they will destabilize the public education system that the middle class has always relied on.

As wealth grows for the few, the poor grow proportionately and those in the middle lose their place and their vital voice. Public education therefore needs to be prioritized and supported to help the middle class regain their rightful role in America to be the economic and political counterbalance for the impoverished and the wealthy. Destroying public education is a deliberate strategy and something that “our wisest patriots” need to address before it’s too late.

*Sherry*



# Advocacy in Albany

MCSBA members, 21 in number, traveled to Albany in March to meet with NYS officials to help them understand the impact of the Executive budget on our school districts and to help them understand how state aid (primarily the Foundation Aid formula), the tax cap and mandates are affecting the sustainability of school districts.

MCSBA members met with representatives of the Governor's office, SED, Senate and Assembly leaders, and our area's senators and assembly members.

## Needs discussed with Albany officials

Maintain the Foundation Aid formula and continue the phase-in for the dollars that schools are entitled to based on that formula. A graph created by Dr. Bruce Capron (HFL), illustrating the gap based on the average levy and foundation aid levels for MC districts, was shared with legislators.

Remove the rebate penalty and provide flexibility in the 2% tax cap – with exemptions for PILOTs and BOCES capital projects.

Also provide tax cap flexibility to cover ELL population growth and special education spikes.

Ease or remove mandates on districts based on updated costs for the minimum wage increases as well as transportation costs for districts for charter school students that are not reimbursable.

Do not freeze STAR and support the previous system of STAR reimbursement.

TOP RIGHT: Shown inside the State Education Department Building before their appointment with SED officials are Sue Casey (Web), Lori Orologio (CC), Lynn Fulmore (CC), Joyce Kostyk (Fpt), Larry Wahl (Web), and Marilyn Monkelbaan (Fpt).

BELOW: Shown at the meeting with officials from the Governor's office are Lisa Ireland (Bro), Marilyn Monklebaan (Fpt), Gene Mancuso (HFL), Gary Stottler (HFL); Terry Pratt, Counsel to the Governor for Education; Jamie Fink, Assistant Secretary for Education; and Jere Hochman, Deputy Secretary for Education; and Valerie Baum (Pit), Joyce Kostyk (Fpt), and Ken Graham (RH).



## Other issues discussed included:

The potential impact of the repeal of ACA on the budget (where/how cuts would be made)

Impact of unfunded and underfunded mandates

The possibility of ethics reform

The Governor's proposal to consolidate UPK, and if the \$5 million competitive grant for half-day and full-day Pre-K would allow all districts to qualify for access based on need.



# Advocacy in Albany



Shown between meetings with lawmakers in Legislative Office Building waiting for an elevator, are: Tom Putnam (Pen), Joyce Kostyk (Fpt), Marilyn Monkelbaan (Fpt), Mark Elledge (Pen), Valerie Baum (Pit), Sherry Johnson (MCSBA), Gene Mancuso (HFL), Gary Stottler (HFL), Mark Kokanovich (Bri), and Ken Graham (RH).



ABOVE: Marilyn Monkelbaan (Fpt), Valerie Baum (Pit), Joyce Kostyk (Fpt), and Marv Sachs (Bri) with Felix Muniz (2<sup>nd</sup> from right), Director of Counsel, Finance and Budget Studies for the NYS Senate.

Sherry Johnson (MCSBA), Suzanne Casey (Web), Senator Pamela Helming, Larry Wahl (Web), and Beckie Schultz (MCSBA).



ABOVE: Those meeting with Senator Patrick Gallivan were Lynn Fulmore (CC), Dan Legault (Bro), Lisa Ireland (Bro), Bob Cook (RH), Gene Mancuso (HFL), Ken Graham (RH), Kathy Dillon (CC), and Terry Carbone (Bro).

BELOW: Senator Patrick Gallivan as he arrived at the meeting. Also shown are Kathy Dillon (CC), Lynn Fulmore (CC), and Dan Legault (Bro).



RIGHT: Mark Elledge (Pen), Assemblyman Mark Johns, and Mike DeLaus (B1).

BELOW RIGHT: Mike DeLaus (B1), Ken Graham (RH), Lisa Ireland (Bro), Terry Carbone (Bro), and Dan Legault (Bro).



# Annual RASHP2 Update



At their March 22 meeting, members of the Labor Relations Committee received their annual update on the status of the insurance plan as well as priorities for the coming year. Among the comments made by presenters Scott Covell, Assistant Superintendent for Management Services at Monroe One BOCES, and Michael Martone, Area Vice President for Gallagher Benefit Services, Inc., were the following:

- RASHP2 remained a Minimum Premium plan since self-funding was not granted by the NYS Department of Financial Services. Ongoing dialogue continues with the department to pursue self-funding.
- Since the plan remained a minimum premium plan, payment of a \$8.2 million Health Insurers Tax was required.
- The RASHP 2 plan continued to show cost avoidance for member districts as the plan continued to beat community and national cost increase trends. The annual savings realized by the plan this year is \$145.2 million.
- The proposed Health Care Reform (American Affordable Care Act) will impact the plan moving forward. Changes will be monitored closely and may require new reporting requirements.
- Ways to manage health care costs under consideration were discussed, including education around true costs and potential benefits for some clients considering migration to high-deductible plans.



ABOVE: Labor Relations Committee Co-Chair Tom Abbott (Hil) flanked by presenters Mike Martone and Scott Covell (B1).



ABOVE: Some of those who attended the RASHP discussion.

RIGHT: Presenters Mike Martone and Scott Covell providing the RASHP update.

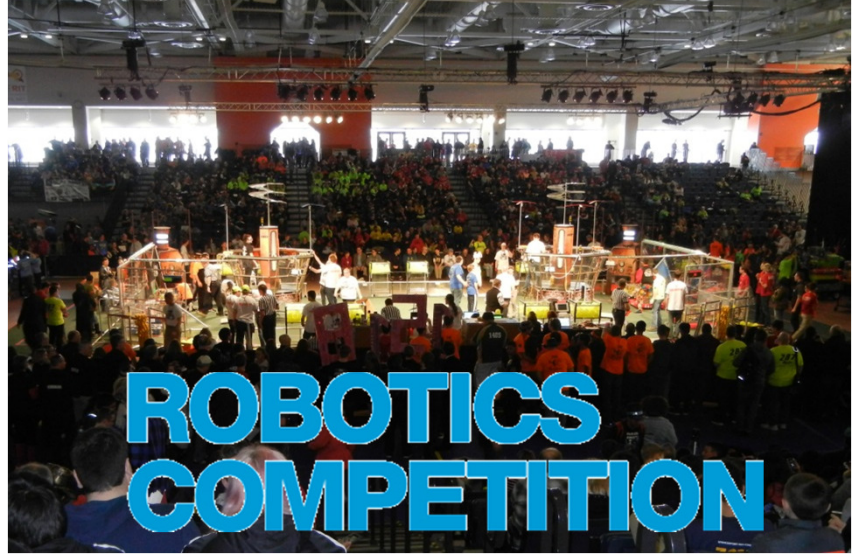




# FIRST®

As part of the national FIRST Robotics Competition, 49 high school teams from the Northeast United States as well as Ontario and Quebec participated in the northeast regional competition held at RIT March 16 – 18. Monroe County public schools were represented by 11 teams from 10 MCSBA districts. Besides the teams pictured below, were groups from East Irondequoit, Greece, and Pittsford. Three Monroe County teams, the Greater Rochester Robotics (GRR) Team (CC), the XCats from Rochester’s Wilson High School, and Ranger Robotics from Spencerport, will compete in the national FIRST Robotics competition in St. Louis April 26-29.

*FIRST* (For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology) was founded in 1989 to inspire interest in STEM by engaging students in exciting mentor-based programs that build STEM skills, inspire innovation, and foster well-rounded life capabilities (e.g., self-confidence, communication, and leadership). FIRST Robotics fosters Coopertition®, displaying kindness and respect while competing, helping and cooperating with one another even while competing. *Coopertition* involves teaching and learning among teammates as well as Mentors.



Wilson HS,  
Rochester



Edison HS, et al.,  
Rochester



Hoeoye  
Falls –  
Lima

The FIRST Robotics program depends on local sponsors as well as interested adults to serve as coaches. Seen in the photo at the left, HFL Board President Gary Stottler (3<sup>rd</sup> from the right) is a team coach.



Fairport



Spencerport



Webster



Penfield



Churchville-Chili