

ICE INDEPENDENT COMMUNITY OF EDUCATORS

August 31, 2006

SCHOOL IN AUGUST BROUGHT TO YOU BY UNITY-WEINGARTEN

Welcome back to the first ever school year starting in August. The 2006-07 school calendar has a record 190 work days for teachers (more for several UFT job titles). The longer school year was endorsed by UFT President Randi Weingarten and the city during 2005 contract negotiations. Tens of thousands of UFT members voted against extending the school year. Keep this in mind as we slog through this interminable year because in the spring UFT members can decide who will negotiate the next UFT Contract where one of the main priorities should be to get us back a full summer vacation.

The Independent Community of Educators (ICE) is a caucus (political party) within the United Federation of Teachers. Union members join caucuses based upon common ideas. Randi Weingarten's caucus is called Unity. Unity is an invitation only closed group that has controlled the UFT since it was founded in 1960. Unity has complete control of the Union's policy making bodies. To join Unity, members must sign a loyalty oath that obliges them to "support the decisions of the caucus and leadership elected from the caucus in union and public forums." In return, Unity members can receive patronage from Randi that includes union jobs, some of which pay over \$100,000 a year with a union as well as a city pension.

Opposing Unity does not make us anti-union. President Bush is a Republican. If you are against any of his policies, it does not make you unpatriotic. ICE opposed Weingarten's policy to start school in August.

RANDI IGNORED ICE WARNINGS ON LONGER SCHOOL YEAR

In 2004 and 2005 there was a huge debate between the political caucuses of the UFT over whether to extend the year/day for UFT members. Randi/Unity advocated negotiating for additional time in the school day and school year as a way to settle our contract dispute with the city. ICE and Teachers for a Just Contract (TJC) said our day and year were long enough. We argued that adding extra time would not have any educational value and that we should not have to extend the day or year to get a decent salary increase. Instead, we backed educating and mobilizing the membership.

In the spring of 2005, ICE representatives at the UFT's Delegate Assembly (the union's highest policy making body) proposed a resolution recommending to the UFT that we reject adding days to the school year in contract negotiations. It was pointed out to the DA that NYC educators already worked a school year that was longer than many of the districts in the surrounding areas. ICE compared calendars in the city with calendars in suburbs and we found that in many Long Island districts the school year had a fixed 183 days for teachers but in the city we were already compelled to toil 185 or more days. We were working a longer school year for significantly lower salaries than educators in the suburbs earn. We saw no justification for lengthening the calendar; we argued that adding days before Labor Day was punitive.

President Weingarten took the rare step of leaving the podium to speak from the DA floor maintaining that she should be free to negotiate a longer school year. Her Unity followers agreed and several months later there was an extension of the school year buried among many givebacks in the new contract. Does anyone want her to negotiate the next contract? Don't be fooled by the 350 person negotiating committee. It's Randi and her Unity sycophants that make the decisions. What will they give up next?

It's time to change UFT leadership. Support the ICE-TJC Coalition that will unite to challenge Randi/Unity in the spring 2007 UFT Election.

ICE: P.O. Box 1143, Jamaica, NY 11421; <http://www.ICEUFT.org>; (917) 992-3734
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