

THE BUDGET VOTE

On April 8, 2014, the board of education held a meeting to discuss and vote on the 2014-2015 budget.

Before this meeting, three of our colleagues from the middle school were told that their jobs would possibly be eliminated unless additional state aid was provided to the district. PJTA spoke with the superintendent and board of education members, making it very clear that no teacher should lose his/her position as it would compromise the educational programs for many children. Mr. Avdoyan, our grievance chair, attended two BOE meetings to express PJTA's position to the full BOE.

Fortunately, an additional \$900,000 in state aid was provided to the district. PJTA and the community were relieved to know that the three teachers and the educational programs would be restored from the budget cuts. Restoring the three teachers and the educational programs would cost the district \$240,000 of the additional \$900,000 in state aid.

After much discussion, the BOE voted 5-4 to use all of the \$900,000 of state aid to restore the three teaching positions and the many other educational programs. The Port Jervis Teachers' Association extends a special thank you to the following BOE members for restoring the teacher positions and the educational programs: Mr. Bello, Mr. Witherow, Mr. Smith, Mr. Torres and Mrs. Figueroa.

All members of PJTA should take special note of the BOE members who voted no and why. The BOE members who voted not to use all of the \$900,000 of state aid are Mr. Onofry, Mr. Kalin, Mrs. Tomasi, and Mrs. Myers. All of these BOE members voted not to restore the three teaching positions and the numerous educational programs each teacher supports. These BOE members only wanted to use a portion of the \$900,000 in state aid and put the rest of it into the fund balance. This is the same fund balance that has approximately \$9 million currently in reserves. Mr. Onofry used the budget discussion to blame The Port Jervis Teachers' Association for the district's budget problems. At each of the last two BOE meetings, Mr. Onofry stated that PJTA salaries increase the budget \$1.3 to \$1.4 million each year. No other BOE member brought the focus and blame for the budget problems on PJTA.

I can assure you that PJTA is not the problem to the budget as Mr. Onofry states. We all have committed at least six years of our lives to higher education and we are all highly qualified. We all have sacrificed greatly at a high financial cost to achieve the title "teacher." The Port Jervis Teachers' Association will not apologize for the salaries or benefits that our members receive as they were achieved through respectful and fair negotiations. It is very unfortunate that Mr. Onofry chose to repeatedly blame PJTA and its members for the yearly budget problems at the BOE meetings.

The Port Jervis Teachers' Association understands that the BOE has a difficult job putting together a budget that meets the needs of the taxpayer and the educational system. There are many situations to blame. The Port Jervis Teachers' Association is not one of them. We have devoted our lives to the children of the Port Jervis School District.