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# Essex Exchange

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## *NJEA stops pension cuts*

### Legislature rejects Buono, Sweeney attacks on future employees

With the echoes of 35 statewide demonstrations by an estimated 12,000 NJEA members still reverberating through the State House on Friday, June 20, the Assembly and Senate budget committees passed a compromise bill that put an end to the very worst elements of a month-long attack on pensions launched by Sens. Barbara Buono (D) and Stephen Sweeney (D).

Just after 9 p.m. Friday, the Assembly Budget Committee, followed in short order by the Senate Budget and Appropriations Committee, voted out A-2818, sponsored by Assembly Speaker Joe Roberts. It represented the compromise legislators needed to end the dispute.

The entire Legislature approved the measure on June 23.

#### Two key changes

For the record, NJEA opposed A-2818, which increases the retirement age for all future employees from 60 to 62, and raises the annual salary threshold for pension eligibility for all future employees to \$7,500 per year, adjusted annually by the CPI or 4 percent, whichever is less. In addition, members earning less than \$7,500, but more than \$500 (TPAF) or \$1,500 (PERS) will be eligible for the state's defined contribution pension plan.

"Neither of its proposed changes is necessary or appropriate," said NJEA President Joyce Powell.

Still, A-2818 fell far short of the three bills pushed by Buono and Sweeney – S-1962, S-1964, and S-1969 – which would have eliminated pensions for tens of thousands of part-time teachers

and school employees, and cut pensions for all future school employees.

#### 3 offending bills 'dead'

"Those three bills are dead," said Powell. "Senator Stephen Sweeney's proposal to calculate pensions by using the highest 5 years' salary instead of the highest 3 is dead. Senator Barbara Buono's proposal for a minimum 30-hour per week requirement for participation in either the TPAF or PERS pension funds is dead. And Senator Buono's proposal to require employees to choose only one job for the purpose of calculating pensions is dead. We also protected the post-retirement medical benefits of part-time employees, which were threatened by both of Senator Buono's bills," Powell said.

The break in the crisis came fol-

## Mock Elections for Students

The 2008 National Student/Parent Mock Election will be held on Oct. 30. Students from kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grade will vote in their schools for the next president of the United States, the state's candidates for the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives, and major national issues. To participate in the New Jersey Mock Election, a teacher or school official must return a school enrollment form. There is no charge to participate.

The enrollment form is available at [www.njmockelection.org](http://www.njmockelection.org). The mock election allows teachers the flexibility to design the voter-education program that is right for their students. Links to free curriculum materials are offered on the New Jersey Mock Election website. NJEA is a supporter of the 2008 National Student/Parent Mock Election

*(taken from NJEA.org)*



# NJEA News— Continued



Pension rally in June.

“There is no question that NJEA turned the tide against these proposals, which would have reduced or eliminated the pensions of countless NJEA members in the future,” Powell said.

Professional Development on line  
[WWW.NJEA.org](http://WWW.NJEA.org)

lowing an unprecedented showing of organizational muscle by NJEA members. On only three days’ notice, an estimated 12,000 of them poured into the streets to protest at the offices of 30 state senators who either supported the original three bills, or who had failed to take a position on them.

“There is no question that NJEA turned the tide against these proposals, which would have reduced or eliminated the pensions of countless NJEA members in the future,” Powell

said.

## ‘A cruel charade’

“Let me be crystal clear,” Powell added. “First, this battle was *never* about ‘pension reform,’ because there was nothing in any of those three bills – or in A-2818 – that addressed the documented abuses that continue to drain our pension systems every day. This was about pension *reduction*, and NJEA and its members won the battle to stop that effort in its tracks.”

In her testimony Friday night, Powell told both budget com-

mittees that “our members did not create this problem. If you don’t end pension abuse for good, this whole process will have been a cruel charade. You will have failed – once again – to address true pension reform or the abolition of abuses that are occurring every day.”

*Information taken from NJEA.org.*

## NJEA web-site

**The NJEA web-site is a valuable resource for members.**

**The website contains important issues affecting public education, professional development resources, grant information, member benefits (such as discounts on a services and coupons for merchants), and resources for members. Log in and surf around!**

### Logging into [njea.org](http://njea.org) just got easier

Can’t find your NJEA membership card or don’t remember your PIN? You can still log into [njea.org](http://njea.org)! Members can now log in to Members Only on [njea.org](http://njea.org) using your e-mail address OR PIN, and your password (the last four digits of your Social Security number, unless you’ve changed it.)

Of course you must have your current e-mail address on file with NJEA in order to use it to log in. If you need to add or update your e-mail address on your profile page – simply log in using your PIN and click the “edit” button on your profile page to do so. While you’re there, why not sign up for NJEA’s e-newsletters? You’ll receive periodic e-mail updates from NJEA on member benefits, professional development, legislative issues, or new member ([NJEA.org](http://NJEA.org))

## New Professional Development Website

The NJEA launched a new professional development website. NJEA has always been committed to professional development. Now, through the NJEA Professional Development Portal, you’ll find one convenient online location displaying all that

NJEA has to offer in professional development from online courses to endless resources.

Through the new professional development website, members will be able to participate in online courses, online collaborative learning, independent

study groups, enhanced e-learning and a new ESP academy.

To participate:

- Log on the NJEA website—[WWW.NJEA.org](http://WWW.NJEA.org)
- Enter you pin/password
- Click Professional Development

# For New Members

The ECEA welcomes our new members. Our Association is a community of teachers and support staff. We extended a heartfelt welcome to our new community members. The Association is here to help answer questions, to assist in professional support, and to provide pertinent information on matters that affect the county and to provide a forum for issues. Each new member should become familiar with his/her local executive commit-

tee and the building reps from the local.

Some information for new teachers:

- Executive Officers: President, Anthony Salese, Belleville; Vice President, Priscilla Burke, East Orange; Secretary, Carolyn Campbell, South Orange-Maplewood; Treasurer, Susan Collins, East Orange; Executive Director, Sandy Linton.

- Important dates for ECEA events are found in the ECEA directory/calendar.
- The ECEA Calendar-Directory is a vital resources for members. The calendar contains name and phone numbers for county information. The calendar is a monthly reminder of the events sponsored by the ECEA. Be sure you calendar is always handy!

## Become A Representative

Please consider becoming an association representative. It is imperative that the county information is disseminated among members of each local. The BEST way to provide information is through colleagues. The county rep meetings are held the across the county at Essex county restaurants. Please check the ECEA calendar/directory for the date, time and

place of each meeting. Dinner is provided for representatives.

The rep council meetings provide important information concerning issues affecting public education as well as addressing issues affecting the membership of each local. The county meetings provide a forum for issues that affect all of us and our profession.

Each local is allowed

one representative for the first 150 members and one rep for each increment of 100. Please consider joining the representative council to address the concerns of your district and provide important information to your colleagues.

Please see your local president to sign up.

*“Our association is a community of teachers and support staff”.  
“The Association is here to assist and help”*

## Jacqui Greadington For Secretary –Treasurer

ECEA’s own Jacqui Greadington is running for NJEA Secretary-Treasure. Jackie has been an active member of the ECEA for over 20 years. Recently, she has been our NEA Director.

Jacqui will be seeking the ECEA endorsement at the September rep council meeting.

Jacqui is an excellent candidate because of her commitment, drive, dedication, and determination. She is uniquely qualified to hold this position as she is the president of Abbot District local and will be an ardent advocate for issues affecting urban districts and diverse counties such as Essex.

When Jacqui is elected, she will become the first executive officer from Essex county in history. It is up to us, Essex County, to ensure that Jacqui is elected. Go Jacqui!

More information on Jacqui and the election will follow in coming issues.



## Essex County Education Association

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### New ECEA website

The ECEA is on the web. The new website should be up and running soon. Please check out our website for updates as the year progresses.

We're on the web.  
[www.eceaonline.org](http://www.eceaonline.org)

## NJEA Convention

If you like bargains, don't delay! Reserve your hotel room in Atlantic City for the 154<sup>th</sup> NJEA Convention. This year's gathering will be held on Thursday and Friday, Nov. 6-7.

For your convenience, NJEA has negotiated special Convention rates at [10 casino hotels and two non-casino hotels](#). Regular shuttle service between these hotels and the Convention Center will be provided by NJEA.

To reserve your room, click the button at the right for [ACrooms.com](http://ACrooms.com) and book your room online at NJEA's special rate. (Note, you must log in to access this page since it is only available to NJEA members.)

But is it worth staying overnight in Atlantic City during the Convention? Even with great rates at great hotels, is there anything going on after hours?

Well, if getting a jump on the exhibit floor and the workshops isn't enough, you *are* staying in Atlantic City, the town that's "always turned on," as its slogan says. Visit [www.atlanticcitynj.com](http://www.atlanticcitynj.com) for details about all that AC has to offer.

There are other great reasons to stay. Several county associations, colleges and professional organizations host **hospitality suites** on Thursday afternoon after the Convention Center closes. That night you can listen to the smooth sounds of the **All-State Jazz Ensemble** in Trump Plaza. If you're not ready to turn in just yet, check out the **NJEA mixer and dance the night away** at the Sheraton Crown Ballroom. All of these events are **free of charge**.

Looking for another kind of excitement? Start training now and hit the boards in the annual **NJEA Boardwalk Run and Fun Walk** on

Friday morning. This sanctioned 5K race follows a scenic, traffic-free course and begins in front of the old Boardwalk Hall. Look for a registration form in your September *NJEA Review* or at [njeaconvention.org](http://njeaconvention.org).

Need another great reason to stay? **Networking**. The best part about the NJEA Convention is that tens of thousands of Association members gather in one spot for two days. But the only way to meet these people is to be there and the best way to meet lots of them is to stay there!

*Information taken from NJEA.org*

