



# THE UNION SOUND

THE VOICE OF A SOUND UNION



Jan./Feb. 2024

*Rondout Valley Federation of Teachers and School-Related Professionals*

Volume 48, Issue 3

# YOUR UNION NEEDS YOU TO GET INVOLVED!



## WHAT CAN YOU DO?

- Download the MAC App on your phone
- Attend Building Meetings
- Sign up for the Spring Highway Cleanup [tbd]
- Join the fight to Fix Tier 6!

Learn more about your union at  
[www.rvfederation.com](http://www.rvfederation.com)



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# President's Message

by Robert McDonough

This is our first issue of *The Union Sound* in 2024, so let me start by saying that I hope everyone's New Year is off to a great start! We made some changes to our calendar last year when we added the Friday off prior to our Presidents' Day weekend. I hope you all found it useful and restful in a long winter, where we haven't had many snow days to recoup. The Calendar Committee meets on March 7th to create next year's calendar. We plan to advocate for keeping a four-day Presidents' Weekend again, if it's possible.

I also wanted to talk about Fix Tier 6 and the NYSUT MAC App. Political action has never been easier! Of course, nothing beats grassroots lobbying and in-person rallies. We are meeting with our legislators at the Committee of 100 to do just that...lobby them on your behalf. We need your help behind the scenes. We need each of you to go to the App Store on your phones and download the NYSUT MAC App. Once you enter your information and make an account, your home address is used to identify your actual state legislators in the senate and assembly. You can then choose from a list of topics and issues and click on the ones that are of importance to you. A pre-generated email is sent to the legislators, and someone from their office will respond with an email stating confirmation of receipt. My idea is not to make this

a one time thing, but to consistently and periodically bombard our leaders with emails, specifically about fixing Tier 6 and fully funding foundation aid.

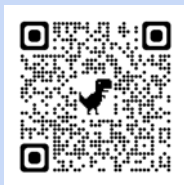
I have been around long enough to remember when Tier 4 was created to fix Tier 3, which at the time was a disaster. Tier 3 workers' terms of retirement were significantly worse and they allowed all Tier 3 people to abide by the terms of Tier 4. This didn't happen by the legislators coming to a moment of clarity. This came about from members just like you taking a stand and saying enough is enough. Members just like you who refused to give up that fight. And they won.

Now it's our time. It's our turn to fight for a better future for those who come after us, and for many of you in Tier 6, you are also fighting for yourselves. It's about pension justice. We believe a career of public service is thirty years. Not thirty-five and certainly not forty.

So with your help and the help of every member across the state, we can make this a reality. Tier 6 affects all public employees, not just teachers. This includes fire fighters, police, and even the staffers in the offices of our legislators. So our hope is that they, too, will see that this must change. The more voices they hear from, the quicker that will happen. As Pink Floyd once said, "together we stand, divided we fall."

Scan below  
to get connected!

NYSUT Mac App



Fix Tier 6



RVF Website

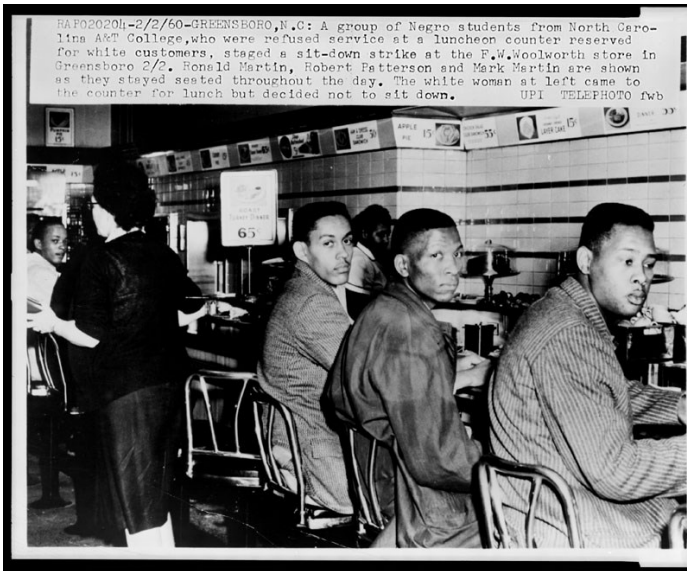


# History Corner

by Jennifer Slauson

## FEBRUARY LABOR HISTORY

- ◆ In the annals of labor history, February has been a month of pivotal events shaping the rights and working conditions of laborers worldwide. One such momentous occasion occurred in 1937, during the Flint Sit-Down Strike in Michigan. Led by the United Auto Workers (UAW), thousands of General Motors (GM) workers occupied several plants, demanding recognition of their union and improvements in working conditions. This bold tactic of factory occupation effectively paralyzed GM's production and forced the company to negotiate with the UAW. Ultimately, the strike ended in victory for the workers, as GM recognized the UAW as the bargaining representative for its employees, marking a significant milestone in the growth of the labor movement in the United States.



- ◆ February 1960 marked the start of the Woolworth's lunch counter sit-ins in Greensboro, North Carolina. In a powerful display of nonviolent protest, this iconic moment in the civil rights movement saw African American college students sit down at segregated lunch counters and refuse to leave until they were served. The sit-ins sparked a wave of similar protests across the South, challenging

discriminatory practices and inspiring collective action for social change. The determination and resilience of these students showcased the power of nonviolent protest in confronting systemic injustice and advancing the cause of civil rights.

- ◆ December 1970 saw the enactment of the Occupational Safety and Health Act (OSHA) in the United States. This landmark legislation aimed to ensure safe and healthy working conditions for workers across various industries. OSHA set standards for workplace safety, conducted inspections, and provided training and assistance to employers and employees. The passage of this act represented a significant victory for the labor movement, as it empowered workers to demand safer workplaces and hold employers accountable for hazardous conditions.
- ◆ In more recent history, February 2018 witnessed a wave of teacher strikes across several states, including West Virginia, Oklahoma, and Arizona. Frustrated by low wages, inadequate funding for education, and changes to their pensions, teachers walked out of classrooms and rallied at state capitols, demanding better pay and increased investment in public education. These strikes, led primarily by grassroots movements of educators, highlighted the vital role of teachers in society and brought attention to the systemic challenges facing public education.





## Financial Update

by David Bonington, CFP®  
Stacey Braun Associates, Inc.

### MAKE SURE YOUR MONEY IS WORKING AS HARD AS YOU ARE!

Hello! I am delighted to return with what I hope will become a series of articles on financial topics.

By the time you read this, Spring will be only a few weeks away. Many people embrace this season with a fresh-start, “Spring Cleaning” mindset – initiating projects to refresh, renew, or enhance things which have been neglected.

What if one of those things being refreshed and enhanced in 2024 was your savings account?

Stand by – I’ll return after a quick announcement. Stacey Braun Associates provides a financial counseling benefit (covered by the Rondout Valley Benefit Trust) which offers access to Certified Financial Planners™ able to provide information, ideas, and suggestions on a range of financial topics – such as Debt and Credit Management, Investing, Insurance, Saving for College and Retirement, and Estate Planning. Many of you have already taken advantage of this program – but if you have not, a meeting could be a step towards improved 2024 financial wellness.

Now back to that opportunity! For the twelve years following the end of the Great Recession in 2010, inflation

remained low and interest rates on most savings accounts started with a decimal point and a zero. However, this is no longer the case. What caused this? The Federal Reserve Bank’s action to raise an underlying interest rate steadily and dramatically since March 2022. Such action is undertaken to combat significant inflation, and although it is painful for borrowers, it eventually creates the opportunity savers enjoy today.

Banks and Credit Unions currently offer liquid, high-yield savings account rates of almost 5%, roughly twice the last forty-year average annual rate of return on cash. For savers willing to “lock up” funds for short periods, measured in months, Certificates of Deposit (CDs) generally offer a slight premium. (If you are comfortable with online banking, rates can be better still – without sacrificing important FDIC insurance.) Finally, it is also possible to get the best of two worlds – handsome rates *and* flexibility – by “laddering” several CDs of different maturities.

The message here? Take steps to make sure your savings are working for you, because the environment for account balances (sorry, I can’t resist) is *interesting* once again!

**Free, confidential Telephone or Zoom sessions  
with a Stacey Braun planner can be arranged  
by calling 1-888-949-1925.  
No financial products are sold  
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Check out all your union membership has to offer!

## Free Premium Calm App for All NYSUT In-Service AND Retiree Members!



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The Calm app -- recognized as Apple's Best of 2018 award winner, Apple's App of the Year 2017, and Google Play Editor's Choice 2018 -- is the #1 app for sleep, meditation, and relaxation with over 100 million downloads. Whether members have 30 seconds or 30 minutes of time available, the diverse content library offered by Calm includes numerous resources for their schedule and needs.

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To learn more about how to create your Calm account and access the premium content for free, visit [memberbenefits.nysut.org/free-member-benefits](https://memberbenefits.nysut.org/free-member-benefits) and then click on "Premium Calm Service." From there, you will find detailed instructions on how to create your Calm account along with a helpful Frequently Asked Questions document about the service. You will need your NYSUT ID number to create an account with your email address and password. Your NYSUT ID number can be found on your NYSUT Membership Card or by visiting <https://www.nysut.org/memberid>.

Once you create your free Calm account on your computer, it is recommended that you download the Calm app for your iOS or Android device. After downloading the Calm app for your preferred mobile device, you can then log in with your email address and password to unlock the premium Calm content.



Learn more by scanning the QR code to the left,  
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or calling 800-626-8101.



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