

We Are On the Verge of Taking Back Our Union and Restoring Our Dignity

Detroit teachers voted almost two to one for a change in leadership for our union. The sentiment for our union to move in a new and better direction is evident in every school. Now there are two slates competing in the DFT Officers run-off elections, scheduled for the first week in January 2011 when we return from our holiday break.

In a straight-up head-to-head contest, Steve Conn and the Defend Public Education/ Save Our Students (DPE/SOS) DFT Officer candidates will face off against Keith Johnson and the UTR candidates. The two slates which did not make it into the run-off election, the EFC slate headed by Victor Gibson and Tracy Arneau, and the MOUF slate headed by Greg Johnson and Wilbur Byrd, have already endorsed Steve Conn and pledged to vigorously campaign for Steve Conn and DPE/SOS.

It is clear from the first round of election results that teachers know that Steve is the only candidate strong enough to save our union, to restore both our democratic norms and our traditions of defending public education and the dignity and worth of teachers, while advocating for the proven education reforms needed to improve our students' education and belief in themselves and their communities. Steve is almost universally regarded as honest, principled, and unflinchingly loyal to Detroit teachers, students and to Detroit as a whole. Steve is the one person who cannot be intimidated into accepting a backroom deal that will further erode public education and our union's strength. Steve will ensure that all policy decisions will be brought to the membership for a vote.

Everyone knows Steve as a fighter. If Steve wins, Rob Bobb, Arne Duncan and the whole charter school establishment will either have a coronary or be reaching for some adult diapers to avoid a mess. ***We need someone who is a fighter to save public education and our union, especially because our enemies include so many rich and powerful forces, from Bill Gates to Education Secretary Arne Duncan to our own AFT President Randi Weingarten. All of these forces want the DFT to become weaker and even more prostrate, in order to pave the way for the growth of charters and to end public education as a right. Keith Johnson is their candidate.***

Keith Johnson has repeatedly agreed to any and every concession Gates and Duncan demand from the teachers. To get us to accept policies obviously against our interests and completely guaranteed to bind us permanently to the vicious policies of concessions

leading to more school closures, worsening conditions and lower student enrollment, and justifying another round of the same outcomes, Keith has cut us off from the forces that support us. Keith has relied on the commonly held but very wrong belief that the only forces with any power in the society are the rich and powerful, and we have to make huge concessions to them to have any chance of maintaining a modicum of the wages and benefits we once enjoyed. Not only is Johnson wrong, but if we continue to act like he is right, we will give up thousands of dollars more in concessions and our pride, dignity and ability to be educators instead of well-paid test proctors.

WE MUST BUILD A MOVEMENT OF TEACHERS WITHIN OUR UNION TO WIN

No teacher is happy with our current situation. Every single one of us already has 10,000 reasons to vote for Steve. To get Steve and DPE/SOS elected, however, we will have to mobilize a united, determined movement of teachers within our union. Steve's confidence in our ability to fight and win is grounded in his real, deep and continuous relationship with DPS students, the community and most importantly with the city of Detroit.

The teachers who back Steve and DPE/SOS, including the slates of teachers who ran against DPE/SOS and who now back Steve and stand united as a force for progress in our union know that the people of Detroit have repeatedly rejected the overtures of charter barons, refused to agree to mayoral take-over and overwhelmingly support DPS teachers and defend public education. They not only know, but feel the enormous authority teachers have with the community.

The easiest way we have to convey the powerful support teachers have in the community is through our students. Ask any of your students to compare and select the slate that they would back and overwhelmingly the students will chose DPE/SOS. The two forces that have the most to gain and the least to lose in telling the truth about the conditions in the schools and what is really needed to improve public education are the teachers and the students. Students have our backs. But then so does Detroit.

**JUDGE BAXTER RULES AGAINST ROB BOBB'S
ILLEGAL TAKEOVER OF DPS—BOBB MUST
GO NOW!**

On December 6, BAMN attorneys for the School Board and Steve Conn announced our victory against Robert Bobb in the School Board's fight for academic control of DPS. Judge Wendy Baxter ruled that Robert Bobb had no right to take over the academics and educational policy of DPS. She stated that Bobb created "education products" and applied a "business paradigm" that envisioned "competitive marketplace schools where parents shop like consumers" and that "the unauthorized Emergency Financial Manager's vision is uninformed by... educational expertise leaving it subject to criticism as a short-sighted business patch, short on teaching and learning wisdom, a short-term fix where some stand to profit shielded... from the eye of public oversight of competitive bids." The most effective way to implement this victory in DPS is to elect Steve Conn and DPE/SOS to lead the fight against Bobb and his attacks on teachers and on public education.

**TO WIN WE NEED TEACHERS IN EVERY
SCHOOL BOLDLY AND OPENLY SHOWING
THEIR SUPPORT FOR STEVE CONN AND
DPE/SOS**

Fear, demoralization and denial are paralyzing many teachers from acting on what they know is the only rational choice they have. In the first round of elections hundreds and hundreds of teachers did not vote at all. **Too many of our teachers are in the mind set of and functioning like a battered spouse in a bad marriage with an abusive husband. What they fear most, is not the next terrible unnecessary beating they know is coming, but rather what will happen if the unknown occurs and they unleash their tremendous pent-up anger and indignation. Our job is to convince them that they have nothing to fear in expressing how angry they rightfully are. None of the rest of us will let them go crazy or hog-wild. What we will do is work collectively with each other through our**

Starting January 3, 2011 VOTE Defend Public Education/Save Our Students Slate!

Steve Conn for President

Christal Bonner for First Vice-President

Gina Porter for Vice-President

Deborah Fisher for First Vice-President

Heather Miller for Treasurer

Nicole Conaway for Secretary

On pay day, remember—you have 10,000 reasons to vote Defend Public Education/Save Our Students Slate!

See Candidates' and endorsers' videos: Youtube.com/user/dftmembers and see our Facebook page

To help campaign call 313-645-9340 or call BAMN Student and Community Organizer, 313-585-3637

union's democratic bodies to reclaim control over our lives and our dignity. It is time to divorce the bully!

The best way each of us can act to get our co-teachers to stop acting from fear and start acting on what they know is needed, is to publically and continuously show our support for Steve and DPE/SOS. We need teachers in every school to campaign with their co-workers. TALK! TALK! TALK! We need lots of face-to-face discussions. We need our supporters to wear campaign stickers, plant a lawn sign in front of your school, sign onto a public pledge sheet we can post on Facebook. Send us a statement or a video giving your top three reasons for backing Steve. We can win, but not without a lot of work.

In both Chicago and Washington D.C. slates of candidates beat the Weingarten/Duncan-backed slates. In Chicago, the union is at last functioning as a union once again, defending its members' basic rights and benefits. DPE/SOS has longstanding ties to the new union leaderships in Chicago and Washington D.C. We have organized together, run for AFT office together, shared information and helped each other. These two locals will be immeasurably strengthened in their struggles to defend public education if Steve Conn becomes President of the DFT. We could build on these three victories to change our union's whole direction.

We have the power to save our union, our students and our city. All we need is to act on rationality rather than fear. We were not always so scared. We can be proud and powerful and pushy and united again. **WE CAN BEAT THIS UNPOPULAR AND INSANE ATTACK AGAINST PUBLIC EDUCATION. THE SCAPEGOATING OF TEACHERS MUST END. THE FIRST TASK IS TO ELECT STEVE CONN AND DPE/SOS. IF WE CAN FIND THE COURAGE TO ELECT STEVE THE REST, QUITE FRANKLY, WILL NOT BE ANYWHERE NEAR AS HARD AS WE FEEL IT TO BE.**