

Dispelling the myths about unions

HOW TO BE EFFECTIVE IN A POINT/COUNTERPOINT

There is a constant drumbeat heard these days in board rooms, legislative chambers, break rooms at work, even in the checkout line at the grocery store.

Many voices want to cut away at valuable public assets, like **health care**, **education** and **libraries**, and assault the rights and benefits of the skilled professionals who provide those services.

Try these responses to help you counter negative voices, whether they are raised at a public meeting, in the news media or in conversation with colleagues, supervisors, neighbors and friends.

THEY SAY: *Union professionals' salaries are too high for these tough times.*

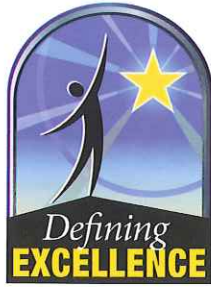
YOU SAY: Our members are all dedicated and highly trained. The professionalism and expertise we bring to our jobs benefits the people we serve in the schools, colleges and hospitals of New York.

YOU SAY: Private-sector professionals in our communities, such as bankers, architects, engineers and lawyers, generally make much more than union members. A large majority of NYSUT practitioners in education and health care must have professional degrees, are certified, and pursue ongoing professional development and training to improve their practice and maintain their licensure.

THEY SAY: *Employees do not deserve a defined benefit pension in these uncertain times. Public employees should have self-funded retirement plans.*

YOU SAY: It strengthens communities when all workers — public and private — have the security of a defined benefit pension plan that enables them to have a decent quality of life after decades of contributing to society. Imagine the fiasco that would have occurred in this market had we not defeated the proposed privatization of Social Security.

YOU SAY: The average teacher's pension is just over \$35,000 a year. While some regions are slightly higher, reflecting a higher cost of living, pensions remain modest. Pensions of more veteran retirees are much lower than the average. Many retirees are having a hard time paying their bills and meeting the costs of their prescriptions.



THEY SAY: *Unions put their members' interests ahead of the needs of the community (or the state, the district, students, the taxpayers, or the hospital ...).*

YOU SAY: Practitioners work closely with key stakeholders in an effort to preserve the important services we provide. Our locals collaborate with PTAs, administrators, advisory groups and local officials to reach consensus on what is best for the institutions and communities we serve.

YOU SAY: We advocate tirelessly for causes that matter to us because the quality of life in our communities depends heavily on the quality work we do.

- How can we make New York a center for learning if our schools and colleges have their funding cut?
- How can we keep our generation and the next generation healthy and able to learn if the funding for the programs they need is cut?

YOU SAY: We are proud of the union's voice in this debate: We advocate for a smarter, healthier state where people want to live, work and learn.

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A Union of Professionals