

Q. WHAT CRITERIA ARE USED BY NYSUT TO SELECT CANDIDATES FOR ENDORSEMENT?

A. The primary consideration is the candidate's positions on educational and labor issues and where the candidate is an incumbent, his or her voting record. The "record" could include information regarding sponsorship of NYSUT legislation, committee votes and party caucus positions, if available. Other considerations include the leadership and/or committee responsibility of the incumbent legislator, and the ability of the challenger to be a viable candidate.

Q. HOW DOES NYSUT DETERMINE A CANDIDATE'S STAND ON NON-EDUCATIONAL/LABOR ISSUES SUCH AS ABORTION, GUN CONTROL, ETC.?

A. It doesn't. NYSUT's membership represents a wide spectrum of political views. The only assumption, which is made, is that the great majority of our members agree on the basic NYSUT/AFL-CIO legislative programs. Consideration of other issues would most probably be divisive and counterproductive.

Q. WHAT CHANCE DO NYSUT MEMBERS GET TO PROVIDE INPUT INTO THE ENDORSEMENT OF LOCAL CANDIDATES?

A. Any endorsement may be initiated by a president of a local, or member of Board of Directors. These recommendations are discussed at a biennial Presidents' Conference on Endorsements prior to their presentation to the NYSUT Board of directors.

Q. WHY DON'T RANK AND FILE NYSUT MEMBERS GET TO VOTE ON ENDORSED CANDIDATES?

A. The entire system of teacher political action depends upon the participation of the rank and file members of NYSUT. They supply the votes, the workers and the money to support or oppose candidates for office. NYSUT relies on your local leadership to accurately represent you at the Local Presidents Conference on Endorsements.

Q. WHAT ROLE DO LOCAL PRESIDENTS PLAY IN NYSUT ENDORSEMENTS?

A. Local input on endorsement decisions is vital. The local president serves as the voice of each local's membership. In order to ensure that the views of each local are heard, NYSUT conducts a Local Presidents Conference on Endorsements during the summer months prior to each general election. Every local is invited to attend, and funding for travel and other expenses is provided to guarantee that financial considerations do not prevent any local from being represented. At the Local Presidents Conference, endorsements are discussed in regional groupings that provide the opportunity for each local president to give input on the races in his or her area. Every attempt is made to achieve a consensus view on each race (whether to make an endorsement or to remain neutral) before the recommendation is carried to the NYSUT Board of Directors for formal endorsement. Clearly, the local president plays an extremely important role in the endorsement procedure.

Q. I AM A REPUBLICAN. WHY SHOULD I SUPPORT NYSUT CANDIDATES WHEN SO MANY OF THE ENDORSED CANDIDATES ARE DEMOCRATS? (Or, vice versa)

A. NYSUT and VOTE/COPE are non-partisan and intend to remain non-partisan. In 2004, NYSUT endorsed 140 Democrats and 35 Republicans in the state legislature and 21 Democrats and 3 Republicans in Congress. Endorsed candidates include the entire leadership of both political parties in the state legislature. Political party affiliation is not a consideration in endorsement.

Q. WHY SHOULDN'T I CONTRIBUTE DIRECTLY TO THE CANDIDATE OF MY CHOICE, RATHER THAN VOTE/COPE?

A. The primary objective of VOTE/COPE is to support those candidates who generally support the NYSUT legislative program. It is essential that the elected officials and candidates for office clearly recognize the link between the union's political arm and its legislative program. VOTE/COPE as a PAC representing collectively more than 460,000 members wields considerably more influence than any individual or local.