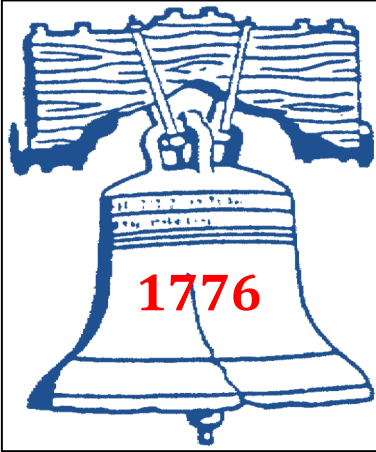


THE

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The Association of Catholic Teachers



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From the President's Desk

A TIME TO GIVE THANKS

During this Thanksgiving season, I always take a moment to thank God for all of the blessings He has given to me, not only in my personal life, but also in my life as President of ACT.

I am thankful for a very supportive husband and children who allow me to do the job that I love, but always make sure that I am taking care of myself during stressful times.

I am thankful for the members of the ACT Executive Board who give of their time and energy, who help me with the important, not always popular, decisions that need to be made to ensure that our Labor-Management Agreement is followed and respected.

(Continued on page 2)

From the President's Desk

(Continued from Page 1)

I am ever thankful for Ginny who makes my world run so much smoother than it otherwise would, and for whom nothing I ask is too much. Ginny definitely helps me to retain my sanity.

I am eternally thankful for you, the members of the Association of Catholic Teachers, who constantly make me proud. This was especially true during the 2023 Negotiations. Without your strength and solidarity throughout the Spring and Summer, the ACT Negotiating Team would never have been able to bring you a contract that you could overwhelmingly ratify. You always do more than is asked of you, as an ACT member, in your classroom and beyond.

Best wishes to you and your families for a Happy Thanksgiving.

Irene

ITS OPEN ENROLLMENT FOR THE VOLUNTARY VISION PLAN THROUGH DAVIS VISION



Teachers wishing to enroll in the Voluntary Vision Plan for the 2024 calendar year will need to submit a completed application form along with payment by **Friday, December 1, 2023**. An application is posted on the ACT website at www.act1776.com. Make checks payable to Association of Catholic Teachers. Send payment along with completed application to Association of Catholic Teachers, 3070 Bristol Pike, Bldg. 2 – Ste. 101, Bensalem, PA 19020.

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

The following Legislative Report was submitted by ACT Legislative Representative, John Corrigan, at the **October 19, 2023** ACT Executive Board Meeting.

1. House Special Election: After a two-month tie of 101-101, Democrats secured a one vote majority in the PA House [D 102 – 101 R] with the special election of Lindsay Powell (D) over Erin Connolly Autenreith (R) to fill the Allegheny County seat of Rep. Sara Innamorato on September 19, 2023.

2. Legislative Update: House Bill 27—On October 4, the House of Representatives voted to approve House Bill 27 by a vote of 106-97. The bill was originally written to address the extension of Act 91 provisions which provided school districts with flexible options to address the ongoing substitute teacher shortage.

As of October 19, the House did not act on \$100 million Lifeline Scholarships provision that was passed in the Senate in July.

The House concurred on the amendments added to HB 27 by the Senate Education Committee on September 20 with the following amendments:

- a. Sen. Mike Regan Amendment: School and Nonpublic Grant Programs to PCCD (PA Commission on Crime & Delinquency) transferred from PDE.
- b. House Amendments (October 4 – providing for an Omnibus School Code). HB 27 is now back in the Senate for their review and response. Senate was back in session on October 16, 2023. They include the following:
 - 1) Increases the total educational tax credits (EITC) available during a fiscal year from \$405 million to \$555 million, a \$150 million increase over the total available for 2022-2023. Includes an increase in data reporting for added transparency and an increase in the amount of tax credits.
 - 2) Sets the minimum number of days or hours of instruction a school entity is required to provide within the school year. (180 days or 900/990 hours)
 - 3) Requires PDE to review and update model curriculum related to economic education and personal financial literacy by 2025-2026. Additionally, the State Board of Education must review existing standards. Beginning in 2026-2027, school entities and nonpublic schools are required to provide a mandatory course in personal finance literacy.

(Continued on page 4)

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

(Continued from Page 3)

4) Creates the Educator Pipeline Support Grant Program for student teachers to be administered by PHEAA.

3. Ohio Voucher Program: An Ohio program that already directs more than \$100 million of public money to private schools will undergo a massive expansion this school year. Recent legislative changes to the state's EdChoice Expansion Scholarship Program means every Ohio family, regardless of income or school district, is now eligible for financial aid to pay private school tuition. The program's expansion comes with a high price tag for Ohio taxpayers. Lawmakers budgeted approximately two billion dollars over the next two years to cover the costs of expanding the program.

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF CATHOLIC SCHOOL TEACHERS HOLDS ANNUAL CONVENTION-CONFERENCE

On October 7, 2023, delegates representing 9 NACST locals attended the National Association of Catholic School Teachers annual Fall Convention-Conference via Zoom.

President, Rita C. Schwartz, gave the **State of the Union** address, noting that it was the Association's 45th Anniversary. Rita outlined NACST's history and its impact over the last 4 and a half decades on the lives of Catholic School teachers nationwide. You can read Rita's *State of the Union* address on page 6 of this Newsletter.

The main order of business of the Fall Conference was to elect new officers for the next three years.

THE NACST EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE FOR 2023-2026

PRESIDENT
EXECUTIVE VICE-PRESIDENT
SECRETARY-TREASURER
VICE PRESIDENTS AT LARGE

MIKE DESANTIS (CHALTA—Cleveland, OH)
MARY KAY ROSSI (CTUNJ—Camden, NJ)
IRENE TORI (ACT—Philadelphia, PA)
KAREN BLAISDELL (AJCSTA—Altoona-Johnstown, PA)
STEVE CROUNSE (DETA—Buffalo, NY)
RYAN HEALEY (GHCEA—Hartford, CT)

The Conference Members then recognized long-time President, Rita Schwartz, for her 30 years of service as NACST President. A copy of the National Association of Catholic School Teachers 2023 Resolution is printed on page 7 of this Newsletter.

SENIORITY LISTS POSTED

Article V, Section 1a states “On or before October 31 of each school year, the Secondary School System shall supply to the Association and shall post in individual schools a complete listing of all teachers in the Secondary School System including those on approved leaves of absence arranged according to system seniority and school seniority.”

“Teachers shall have until **December 15** to call attention in writing to errors or file grievances with the local school administration concerning their positions on the seniority roster.”

FSA REMINDER

If you were a participant in the 2023 FSA Program, please remember that all monies in your account should be exhausted by December 31, 2023. Any funds that remain in your account after December 31, 2023 will be lost. However, this does not mean that all your eligible expenses have to be submitted by December 31, 2023. You have 90 days after the close of the calendar year in which to submit eligible expenses for 2023. All eligible expenses for 2023 must be submitted by March 30, 2024.

ACT WEBSITE

All teachers are asked to logon to the ACT Website (www.act1776.com) and verify your personal information. It is critical that we have your current information and that it is accurate. It is important that we have a **PERSONAL** email address for you, since Executive Board Minutes, Newsletters, and other pertinent information will be sent via email. We cannot and will not send email to a school email address.

Every teacher was provided with a username and password for the ACT Website. (New teachers will receive their logon information in an email.) If you do not have this information, please contact Ginny at the ACT Office at 215-568-4175 or email her at ginny@act1776.com and she can provide this information to you. To update your personal information, logon to the ACT Website and, in the upper right-hand corner of the homepage, click on member login. Type in your username and password and then verify the information on file. Any changes made will be sent to the ACT Office automatically.

NACST STATE OF THE UNION

Rita C. Schwartz, President

Happy Anniversary to the National Association of Catholic School Teachers. We turn 45 this year.

The National was established in 1978. Several Catholic Teacher Unions that were affiliated with AFT, AFL-CIO had been talking about the need to establish a national union exclusively for lay teachers in Catholic elementary and secondary schools. During the 1978 AFT Convention, the Catholic teachers leaders decided to form an Ad Hoc Committee to do just that.

AFT had been very good to the Catholic locals; however, it was getting extremely difficult to continue to pay dues to an organization that was totally against the parents of our students receiving any type of financial assistance. Although AFT and AFL-CIO had supported us as teachers and union members, they did not support our schools.

The NACST Constitution was written and ratified. The Locals, then, disaffiliated from AFT and the National Association of Catholic School Teachers was born.

It wasn't always easy, especially, as a result of the 1979 U.S. Supreme Court decision **NLRB v. Catholic Bishop of Chicago**, Catholic elementary and secondary teachers were no longer protected by labor law. This condition was exacerbated by the number of Bishops and Archbishops who were not very labor friendly.

It has been almost five decades and NACST continues to be front and center for Catholic school teachers.

I was fortunate to have been an active participant in 1966 in the creation of the Association of Catholic Teachers, the first Catholic teachers union in the United States as well as the formation of the National Association of Catholic School Teachers in 1978. For the past 30 years, it has been my honor to serve as President of NACST and work with an incredible group of Catholic teacher union leaders.

While the dedication and strength of these leaders continue to make me proud, I cannot say the same for many of the Church's hierarchy who continue to disappoint. My mantra, which is also my favorite picket sign, is "Practice what you preach or we won't teach."

It becomes more challenging each year for you to maintain the labor agreements that protect your teachers' rights and benefits.

You need to continue to fight to keep your members strong and your Union stronger.

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF CATHOLIC SCHOOL TEACHERS 2023 RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, the National Association of Catholic School Teachers is an organization founded on the precepts of Justice and Dignity for Catholic School Teachers, and, in that capacity, strives at all times, to ensure that the Church treats its employees with the Social Justice, that they preach, and

WHEREAS, Rita Schwartz, throughout her long tenure on the NACST Executive Board, most recently serving many years as President, has given witness to the Social Justice teachings of the Catholic Church, teachings which champion both Justice and Dignity for all working people, and

WHEREAS, Rita Schwartz, has spent decades working relentlessly for all teachers in Catholic Schools and, most especially for the teachers in the secondary schools of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, and

WHEREAS, Rita Schwartz, has enthusiastically served the teachers employed in Catholic Schools of many Dioceses as President of NACST and President of ACT, in their fight to maintain recognition and representation that they so rightly deserve, and

WHEREAS, Rita Schwartz, has aided, developed, and mentored the leadership skills of many local presidents over her outstanding tenure as President of NACST:

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the leadership and membership of the National Association of Catholic School Teachers with the approval of this Resolution hereby honor Rita Schwartz as she leaves the Office of NACST President, on December 31, 2023, knowing that she has made the lives of many Catholic teachers better because of her dedication to teachers' rights, and that she remains devoted to the causes of justice and dignity; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT her colleagues wish her a tremendous THANK YOU for the effect she had on their lives.

Rita thanked the Conference Delegates for the wonderful words presented to her in the Conference Resolution. "I will miss you all so very much. The six decades I have spent working with and for Catholic elementary and secondary lay teachers has been a labor of love for me."

"I know I am leaving you in very capable hands."

The ACT Executive Board and Staff
wish you and your family a



Happy Thanksgiving.