



VIA ELECTRONIC AND USPS MAIL

July 16, 2019

Dear NHFT member:

We're writing to make sure that you have the facts—and the decisions based on those facts—regarding a challenge to the December 2018 election for NHFT officers. In March 2019, former NHFT Vice President Tom Burns filed an appeal of the election results with the national AFT. Mr. Burns ran as a candidate for NHFT president, losing to Mr. Cicarella by 20 votes (a third candidate, Ms. Cameo Thorne, also ran).

When concerns are raised about a local election, we take it very seriously indeed. The AFT Constitution authorizes the AFT Executive Council to investigate when allegations are made that an election in an AFT affiliate has been conducted in a way that violates the local or AFT constitution or the standards set up by federal law. The AFT conducted an in-depth investigation into the election allegations made by Mr. Burns, including a hearing by an appointed committee of AFT Executive Council Vice Presidents, with all parties interviewed under oath. A copy of the AFT Decision and Order is available at the following link: https://www.aft.org/sites/default/files/aft_decision_concerning_the_internal_elections_at_the_new_haven_federation_of_teachers.final_0709196.pdf. We have also been advised that the U.S. Department of Labor is conducting its own investigation.

Mr. Burns has also alleged that Mr. Cicarella, as NHFT president, had mismanaged and misused union funds for his own benefit. In response, AFT Connecticut commissioned a thorough investigation of this allegation, conducted by an independent lawyer, Michael Doyle. It included interviews with NHFT elected leaders, the local's Certified Public Accountant, and Mr. Burns, as well as a careful review of the local's financial processes and records.

What we found: *There were no improprieties in how the election was run, and no evidence of misuse or mismanagement of union funds by Mr. Cicarella.* There was no evidence of ballot tampering or ballot security issues, or of improper use of the union newsletter or other union perks to advance Mr. Cicarella's candidacy. We found no evidence for Mr. Burns' claims that Mr. Cicarella mishandled/misused union funds. In fact, Mr. Cicarella's expenditures as president are well-documented and are regularly approved by the NHFT Treasurer, Vice President (the position Mr. Burns previously held), and Finance Committee. An independent CPA performs an annual audit of the NHFT's expenditures and assets. NHFT's finances are well-run and transparent.

Despite these findings, however, the AFT has decided that the election must be rerun. During our election investigation, we discovered that members of three private-sector NHFT chapters weren't given a chance to vote in the December 2018 election. These chapters (a group of private school teachers at the Cedarhurst School of Yale University's School of Medicine, and two visiting nurse associations in the New Haven area) total about 27

The American Federation of Teachers is a union of professionals that champions fairness; democracy; economic opportunity; and high-quality public education, healthcare and public services for our students, their families and our communities. We are committed to advancing these principles through community engagement, organizing, collective bargaining and political activism, and especially through the work our members do.

American Federation
of Teachers, AFL-CIO

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members and are serviced by AFT Connecticut. But they are members under both the NHFT constitution and the AFT Constitution. Additionally, federal law requires that local members in good standing have the right to vote in local union elections. Federal court decisions have strongly upheld this right.

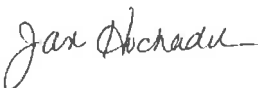
We can't know if these roughly 27 votes would have made a difference in the outcome of the original election, given the 20-vote margin. However, the right of a member to participate in the internal elections of its local is an important threshold issue and you deserve to have complete faith in the election outcome. Thus, the AFT has decided that the 2018 NHFT election must be rerun for all candidates in contested positions. The rerun will happen early this fall, with a four-week voting period. The AFT will monitor the conduct of the election.

Unfortunately, it gets more complicated. As mentioned earlier, Mr. Burns made allegations about financial practices of the local under Mr. Cicarella's leadership. We've learned that, in the presence of Mr. Cicarella and two other individuals, Mr. Burns threatened to make his allegations public unless Mr. Cicarella resigns his office. At the investigation hearing, the two other individuals who heard these statements by Mr. Burns testified under oath that he made them.

We believe such behavior by Mr. Burns constitutes extortion. What should the consequences be when a candidate for union office uses threats to try to settle an election dispute? Our union and its leadership will not abide illegal activity of this nature by anyone for any reason. The AFT has decided to disqualify Mr. Burns from participating in this election and the next one, or from being appointed to office during this time period.

AFT Connecticut and the AFT will be monitoring this situation closely and working with NHFT until a new election is held successfully. We will keep you posted. Thank you for the chance to set the record straight and share our decision in this matter.

In solidarity,



Jan Hochadel
President, AFT Connecticut



Randi Weingarten
President, American Federation of Teachers

RW : DS
Enclosures (1)