

Colleagues,

In many conversations with LPN instructors today, we noted a sense of discouragement creeping in. To be fair, part of it may have originated with yesterday's email, which has been variously described as sounding "weary," "tired," "beaten" and "gloomy" – sorry about that. But most of it arose when people reached legislators or legislative assistants and were told, "There is nothing we can do," or "The Governor has made her decision." Those comments do sound like we have lost. We have acknowledged from the beginning, however, that the Governor made this cut on her own, without the need of legislative approval. We have tried to muster support through public hearings, through press conferences, through letters to the editor, and through our Facebook page. To a large extent, those efforts have been successful; she cannot pretend that the people of Connecticut do not care about nursing education. You have contacted legislators by the dozens to help create awareness of the issue at the Capitol, and you have been heard. By the end of last week, we could feel real support, both public and political, turning our way.

Now we have to turn that support into action. In the past two days, we have sent over 150 emails to the members of the Board of Education, the Appropriations Committee, and legislators who represent districts where there are LPN programs or LPN students. Every senator and most of the representatives have received emails. Our message has evolved. For the past two weeks we spoke of how worthwhile our LPN programs are, and we believe that fact is now accepted by everyone involved. Now we have focused on one point: the Governor's elimination of the LPN program does not save money; it costs money. The attachment "The Governor" is one of two letters we sent out; the other is similar, and we sent it from different computers so the emails were attributed to different names. Each email was individually addressed to the specific individual, a horrendously laborious attempt to personalize our message. Our hope was that one key person – just one – would read the email, realize the Governor's math does not work, and publically call on the Governor to explain how her elimination of the program will save money. One key person has now stepped forward. Senator Edith Prague, a supporter of ours from the start, asked us to send a bulleted list so she explain our concerns to the press and the Governor's office. That list is attached. We believe that we have arrived at a moment when the conversation is about to change: it will no longer be "Can we afford to run the program?" but "Can we afford not to?" We are not done yet. We need more people to join Senator Prague. Several legislators have asked to see the rationale of our claims. We need them to join together with Senator Prague so that the Governor has to restore the program or risk seeming foolish. We need to keep the pressure on the Governor's office and the legislators to stop the suspension of the program. She still has time to do it; no one has been placed in another job, the applicants can be called, sanity can return. We believe that today was the most important, most successful day of the campaign so far. We will not give false hope: the battle is over when and if – and only when and if – the Governor sends out her lists of cuts and the LPN program is not on it. That has yet to happen. But there is no weariness or gloom in our office tonight.

We still believe that we need to engage the entire membership in this fight, so tomorrow the Vocational Instructor Extra will appear in every school. We hope that by explaining the process we have gone through in this struggle and by articulating our reasoning, more members will step forward to help. More and more teachers from other programs contact us every day to tell us what they have done, and ask what else they can do. This battle has reaffirmed that the SVFT is

truly a *union*. We hope everyone reads the Vocational Instructor Extra; the process of writing, editing, formatting, re-editing, printing, and mailing it in three days was grueling. It could not have been done without our secretary Valerie, who stayed late, worked through lunches, and got involved in tasks well outside her job description; yes, we recognize the irony. If the VIX gets just a few more people writing letters, making contacts, getting people to ask, “How can spending more money to suspend the LPN program possibly help close the deficit?” it has been worth it. We need to keep writing, keep calling, keep talking about the illusion of savings, and most importantly of all keep picking each other up when we get down. Today was a positive day in our fight; let’s make tomorrow better.

Rick, Jan, and Ed