

Colleagues,

All instructors are now undoubtedly aware that the Governor's Deficit Mitigation Plan has called for the elimination of the LPN program. The SVFT has been in contact with the LPN instructors and their building representatives all week. The complete daily record of those messages is available at our website, www.svft.org; we suggest you read them to get a fuller grasp of the problems we are facing. As the week ends, we want to answer some of the questions that have come up repeatedly this week:

- *What is the SVFT's plan to save the LPN program?*

We are looking for legislation to be introduced to dramatically increase the tuition for the program so that the program is not run at a cost to the State. We have already contact AFT, our lobbyist, several legislators, and many other people in this effort. The LPNs themselves have made hundreds of contacts. On Monday, December 7 we are having a meeting with one representative from each school to coordinate our efforts; we have included the agenda for the meeting. On Tuesday, we will have representative at a press conference in Hartford to discuss the benefits of the program. On Thursday our Political Action Committee will gather to make additional contacts in support of our proposed legislation. On Tuesday, December 15 we are planning a rally in favor of our plan for teachers, students, health care providers, and everyone else who shares our sense of outrage over the Governor's proposal.

- *Why does the SVFT say we must increase fees 400%? Isn't that figure too high?*

We have used an estimated cost for each LPN instructor of salary + benefits at \$120,000. When we consider the experience of our staff, the fact that every LPN instructor with more than one year's experience qualifies for the degree scale stipend, and that 22.7% of the instructors are paid on the VS03 scale, that estimate is not too high. A program with four instructors and a department head therefore has a cost to the state of \$600,000 per year. That same program has 40 students who must pay \$15,000 per year, or \$7500 per semester, to cover costs. That makes the cost for the program \$22,500. We have used that figure as a ballpark number, but we found out today there were two studies taken to see what the tuition would have to be to cover costs. One study said \$19,800, the other \$20,300. Our estimates were pretty accurate given that none of us are math teachers, much less accountants.

- *How will students ever be able to afford that tuition?*

Just as the Governor cannot prove that students will not pay \$20,000 to attend our program, we cannot prove they will. The student loans that allow students to pay \$30,000+ at Lincoln Tech or Porter & Chester are not available for our programs. We are beginning to explore other options students could pursue for funding so we can make that information available to applicants. We believe that once we identify those funding sources we will have students, because we will

provide a superior product at 2/3 the cost of the private schools. But it is one more complication to get over.

- *Where did the Governor get the estimated cost savings of \$1.7 million?*

We have no idea. If she considers that 86% of the teachers in the program have SEBAC protection, then the figure is ridiculously high for the short term. If she is removing all the salaries of the LPN instructors from the DOE budget, it's much too low. We have stopped wondering about it and moved to solving the problem.

- *Who is Dan Livingston and why do you want to meet with him?*

Dan Livingston is lead negotiator for SEBAC, the State Employee's Bargaining Agent Coalition. We want to meet with him to clarify what everyone's SEBAC rights are if our efforts to keep the programs open fail. We are not being defeatist or pessimistic when we acknowledge it is our responsibility to make sure that our members receive all their rights if we cannot prevail.

- *When will the Governor's plan have to be voted on in the legislature?*

It doesn't. The Governor maintains she has the authority to close the program on her own. We have yet to find a legislator or outside expert who disagrees with that assertion. That is why we are seeking separate legislation to raise the fees that would make her plan fiscally unnecessary.

- *When will we have an answer about what is going to happen to the LPN program?*

To be honest, we have an answer: the LPN program is closed. The SVFT does not accept that answer, and we are looking to give the Governor reason to change it. If the question is when are we going to accept no as the answer, we will accept the closing of the program only if and when every opportunity to change the decision has been exhausted, every recommendation to implement our program to give us a chance to cover costs has been rejected, every possibility to make the Governor look at the LPN program as a vehicle for prosperity and not just another expense has been taken, and every day that we can use has passed. We don't know if we will ever have to reach that point, but it sure as hell isn't going to be soon.

In Solidarity,

Rick, Jan, and Ed