

WHEN *IS* ENOUGH IS ENOUGH?

(as delivered to the Education Committee of the Nassau County Legislature on February 3, 2009)

My name is Barry Fischler and I am the president of the Nassau Community College Federation of Teachers, which represents the full time classroom and non- classroom faculty at Nassau Community College. I would like to thank the Legislature for its consistent awareness of the fact that public education is a cornerstone of democracy and your commitment to the welfare of our students. Your past support for the college and our negotiated collective bargaining agreements is to be commended.

You may or may not be aware that our current contract expired on August 31, 2008 and we have been engaged in serious negotiations for over 7 months with the college/county joint employer. Significant progress has been made on the non-economic issues. The atmosphere at the table has been professional. We have not had to declare impasse. This in itself is a testimonial to the progress that has been achieved.

However, I come to you with a problem. This union is well aware of the financial challenges facing the county. As a matter of fact, several months ago we agreed to consider a financial package which showed a responsive position to these fiscal challenges. It is our belief that the county was contacted and gave its approval to proceed.

We know that the input and approval of the county is necessary to finalize the negotiating process. However, on at least three occasions the county cancelled its participation at the last minute. As a matter of fact, the last no-show occurred this past Monday evening.

Mr. Suozzi in his address to you on Monday and again on Cablevision that evening indicated that he would be willing to sit down and listen to any union proposals. He said he would talk to anyone and yet he or his representative has so far refused to talk directly to this union.

So I am here to appeal to your sense of fairness. We are taxpayers and we are voters who deserve to be treated with the same dignity and respect that we treat others.

In order for an agreement to occur both sides must show up. I don't think that is too much to ask the County Executive.

Thank you.