

FOR RELEASE:
Thursday, August 13, 2009

CONTACT: Lise Bang-Jensen
(518) 434 3100

NORTH COUNTRY SCHOOL CONTACTS POSTED ON SEETHROUGHNY *Website Includes Updated Teacher and Superintendent Contracts*

Updated school labor contracts for eight teacher unions and eight school superintendents in North County Region were posted today on www.SeeThroughNY.net, the Empire Center's government transparency web site.

The updated teacher contracts include these school districts: Ausable Valley, Brushton-Moira, Chateaugay, Copenhagen, Moriah, Norwood-Norfolk, Tupper Lake and Champlain Valley BOCES.

The new superintendent contacts are with these districts: Chateaugay, Chazy, Colton-Pierrepont, Morristown, Ogdensburg, Plattsburgh, Tupper Lake and Franklin-Essex-Hamilton BOCES.

The newest contacts (most have a July 1, 2009 effective date) are part of the most comprehensive public collection of school district labor contracts in New York. Contracts for the 733 school districts and BOCES districts were obtained under the Freedom of Information Law (FOIL). The majority of those contracts apply to the coming school year. A number of FOIL requests for updated contracts are pending.

"This makes it easier for parents and taxpayers see how the contracts impact what happens in the classroom and the size of their school property tax bills," said Lise Bang-Jensen, senior policy analyst for the Empire Center.

For example, teacher contracts can determine base salaries; step raises and extra pay for seniority; pay for non-teaching duties such as coaching; length of school year, work schedules and time off; class size, student discipline and teacher evaluation; grievance and disciplinary procedures; scheduling of parent-teacher conferences; and health insurance benefits for employees, retirees and their families.

Since its launch on July 31, 2009, the SeeThroughNY site has been visited more than 1.3 million times, generating 5 million data requests, also known as "page loads."

SeeThroughNY also offers: searchable databases of complete employee payrolls for the state government, New York City, public school districts and 19 public authorities; a breakdown of \$148 million in legislative pork barrel projects; operations spending by the state Senate and Assembly; and a benchmarking tool to compare local government spending on a per-capita basis.

The Albany-based Empire Center is a project of the Manhattan Institute for Policy Research, one of the nation's leading non-profit 501(c)3 think tanks.