

PROVOCATOR

Fall 2016

OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE BUFFALO TEACHERS FEDERATION VOLUME 45/NUMBER 2

DEDICATION
SOLIDARITY
PROFESSIONALISM
PRIDE
SECOND TO NONE



New BTF Contract Approved By Teachers And The Buffalo School Board

After more than 12 years without a contract, Buffalo teachers almost unanimously ratified a new pact Oct. 17 during an all-member meeting of the Buffalo Teachers Federation.

The meeting, held at Kleinhans Music Hall, was attended by an estimated 2,200 teachers anxious to hear the agreement.

BTF President Philip Rumore, accompanied on stage by the Negotiations Team, outlined the contract and fielded questions from the audience. After about 3 hours, a voice vote was taken and the proposal was overwhelmingly approved.

“While no contract ever provides everything every person wants, we believe our new contract addresses major shortfalls in the 1999-2004 contract and defeats some of the serious assaults on us,” Rumore said. “There would be no contract without your demonstration of solidarity. As you know, there were some on the Board intent on breaking our union, including forcing us to continue negotiating for years and engaging in an illegal action.”

Before presenting the contract proposal to the general membership, Rumore presented it to the Executive Committee and Council of Delegates. It was during that meeting that Rumore was notified that the Board of Education had approved the pact by a vote of 7-2.

The new, three-year contract, which is retroactive to the beginning of this school year, includes a 10 percent pay hike in the first year, and a two percent salary increase in each of the next two years. The removal

of “hold steps” 20 and 22 will be made during the 2017-2018 school year and “hold steps” 16 and 18 will be removed during the 2018-2019 school year.

Upon ratification, all hourly rates, coaching positions and club advisers were also increased at the same rate. Mileage reimbursement will reflect the prevailing IRS rates.

The pact also includes a one-time payment to each teacher based on his or her step in the contract. The payments range from \$2,000-\$9,000.

The District also agreed to give a \$350,000 one-time payment to the Supplemental Benefit Fund and a \$25 per member increase contribution each year of the contract.

In exchange for the pay increases, teachers will now pay a dollar amount towards the cost of their health insurance. The cosmetic rider has also been eliminated.

The school year has been lengthened by two days with one day before the open of schools without assignments for teachers to set up their rooms. The school day has been lengthened by 25 minutes.

In addition to President Rumore, the BTF Negotiations Team included Presidential Assistants Edith LeWin and Rebecca Pordum, Teachers Sophia Howard Johnson, Joseph Montante, and the NYSUT Labor Relations Specialists Dennis Licherelli, Nick Whitman and Deana Fox.

The entire contract and salary schedule was emailed to all teachers. It is also on our website ([www.btfny.org/news & alerts](http://www.btfny.org/news&alerts)).





THE CHALLENGES AHEAD

With the typical and unmatched solidarity of Buffalo teachers in buildings and in one of our largest solidarity demonstrations ever, we achieved a contract that:

- Moves our maximum MA +30 salary from \$77,666 to \$96,401.
- Removes the four (4) “hold steps” that kept teachers on steps 15, 17, 19, 21 for two years, greatly reducing their cumulative earnings.
- Provides for one-time payments of \$2,000 to \$9,000 that can be put into a TSA.
- Provides for a fixed dollar medical payment that is far less than the 10% the District sought.
- Provided a \$350,000 payment and an additional \$25/teacher per year increase to our Supplemental Benefit Fund that will enable us to finally increase dental and optical benefits.
- While increasing the school year by two days, finally provides teachers with a duty-free day prior to the opening of schools to prepare their rooms for students. The 42-week maximum remains.
- Establishes one transfer list instead of the current two (2) by combining the one (1) for involuntary transfers and the one (1) for voluntary transfers (that is used after the involuntary transfers are completed). The list will be based upon teacher seniority.
- The work day will be increased by 25 minutes not the 40 minutes the district demanded.

You have no doubt read and reread the contract and our emails.

One of the important aspects of the “hold step” removal is that in addition to being a major cumulative salary boost, it is the next and critical step in achieving the reduction of steps to reach maximum.

The plan has been to steadily remove the time between longevity steps.

The steps used to be 15, 19, 23, 27, 31, 35.

By knocking them down to one year and further increasing the salaries beyond the 10% increase, we are now ready to reduce the steps to maximum to the 15-20 year range found in other contracts.

Yes, it took time; however, you need to have a plan to reach your objectives. We are now ready to complete that plan in our next negotiations which could begin as early as next February.

While no contract provides what everyone wants, our goal was to make a career as a Buffalo Teacher rewarding. You need to be able to see that as you continue your career, you and your family are second to no one, not only in salary and benefits, but also in teaching and learning conditions.

We can't lose sight of that goal or our willingness to continue our solidarity until and after it is achieved.

The challenges ahead are as outlined above, as well as negotiating a fair teacher evaluation document, fighting receivership and all the other attacks on us.

The outcome of the last national election will bring challenges few could have imagined.

Needless to say, as a result of that national election, we have to be more organized than ever before.

Yes, there will be very serious policy and legislative battles; however, the filling of Justices to U.S. Supreme Court with the already one (1) but possibly two (2) more vacancies will leave a mark for generations.

In addition to the great social issues are the attacks on unions. The death of Justice Scalia resulted in a tie vote on the Friedrich's case. That case was designed to undermine collective bargaining and unions.

We need, and will be ready, to be mobilized to overcome and fight all the battles that lie ahead.

We cannot despair but rather come together and continue to fight against all those who might destroy education and our country. We will prevail. As you have no doubt heard me say many times, “Bring them on!”

BTF at a Glance

BTF President

Philip Rumore

BTF Vice President

Edith LeWin

BTF Treasurer

Rebecca Pordum

BTF Secretary

Kevin Gibson



BTF Executive Committee Members

Pre-K-6

Sophia Howard-Johnson,
Christopher Stephens, Trisha Rosokoff,
Rachel Binda-Lis, Phyllis Mays,
Teresa Leatherbarrow

7-12

Tom Gattie, Melissa Kenney,
Dennis Brancato, Chris Salamone,
Tom Anthony, M. Sue Raichilson,
Lynn Garcia

K-12

Melinda MacPherson-Sullivan, Mark
Mecca, Gregory Sawicki, Nicole Herkey,
Lucille Emmi, Susan Marie Baker,
Sean Crowley

At Large

Mike Mecca, Joseph Montante,
Ruyvette Townsend

BTF Headquarters Staff

Philip Rumore, *President*
Edith LeWin, *Presidential Assistant*
Rebecca Pordum, *Presidential Assistant*
Tim Connick, *NYSUT Counsel*
Dennis Licherelli, *NYSUT
Labor Relations Specialist*
Nick Whitman, *NYSUT
Labor Relations Specialist*
Deana Fox, *NYSUT Labor Relations
Specialist*

Visit Our Updated Website
www.btfny.org

PROVOCATOR

BTF Provocator Staff

Rebecca Pordum, *managing editor*
Chris Salamone, *editor*
Joseph Montante, *photo editor*

The **Provocator** is the official publication of the Buffalo Teachers Federation. It will be published during the 2016-2017 school year as a service to BTF members and interested parties in the community. Subscription price is included in BTF dues.

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Buffalo, New York 14201.

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The **BTF** is an affiliate of **NYSUT**, **AFT** and **NEA**.

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Letters to the Editor

BTF Donates to MSOM Recital Series

I hope this message reaches you in the best of health and spirit. On behalf of the students, parents, faculty, and staff of Muhammad School of Music (MSOM), we would like to thank you for your kind donation of \$250 to the MSOM Voice of My Heart Recital Series and our star student, Amirah Muhammad's 2016 New York City Ballet Summer Intensive Tour.

We are so appreciative of your contribution to our efforts. It is your support that enables us to continue impacting the lives of talented youth, as well as, sharing the gift of music and the arts throughout the community. Please do not hesitate to call upon myself and/or the MSOM Chamber Players for any musical needs that may arise where we can be of service.

Thank you for your support.

Musically,

Henri L. Muhammad, maestro

BTF Donation Helps Lafayette HS Alumni

On behalf of the Lafayette HS Alumni Association I would like to thank you for your support of our Masters of Music Program. As you are aware, the program was dedicated to a long time educator, mentor, and musician, the late Sam Scamacca.

We had musicians come from as far away as California to honor their music teacher. The program was a huge success thanks to you and those who donated their time and talents entertaining us that evening.

We certainly would not have been able to sponsor such a wonderful evening without your dedication and support. Once again, thank you so very much for your donation. The monies raised will be used to help the Alumni Association continue to present scholarships, sponsor programs, and in general just help Lafayette High School wherever we can.

Very sincerely yours,

Jenny duBois-Delmont, president

Verizon Workers Value BTF Solidarity

I want to personally thank you for your Union's extraordinary expression of solidarity for the 40,000 members of CWA and IBEW that were on strike at Verizon. Your generous donation helped our most vulnerable, struggling families make the rent, meet a car payment, or feed their families as they fought for a contract. Your donation will be used to assist strikers who had expenses that could not be covered in any other way. Your support meant that our striking members would not be "starved" back to work and would be able to keep up the fight. It made a huge difference.

Our strike and striking members stayed strong and were committed to battling the outrageous demands of Verizon, the poster child for "Corporate Greed." This was a fight on behalf of every worker in this country, because if a company making \$1.5 billion a month in profit can get away with what Verizon has been trying to do – sending good American jobs overseas and shifting them to low wage non-union contractors in the United States – then every other employer will follow suit. Someone had to draw the line in the sand, and 40,000 members of CWA and IBEW said "enough is enough."

You and your Union stood up for the middle class. You stood up for working families nationwide. I know I speak for all CWA and IBEW striking families in commending your efforts and expressing our deep appreciation.

We will never forget your unselfish act of solidarity.

Fighting the Fight Together!

In Unity,

Christopher M. Shelton, president

LRS Thanks BTF For Chicken Wings

Thank you for the wings from Anchor Bar. What a treat! We shared them with the NYSUT Suffolk Regional Office.

So grateful for the opportunity to work with your members!

Congratulations!

In Solidarity,

Deborah Lloyd-Priest

NYS Labor Relations Spec.

Suffolk Regional Office

CEJ Thanks BTF For Contribution

We would like to thank the Buffalo Teachers' Federation for the generous donation to the CEJ's Annual Awards Banquet. Your contribution helped make the night a huge success and gave us the opportunity to honor our devoted staff, our members & supporters, and many tireless fast food workers. We've been fortunate enough to be able to mark 2016 as our 30th year in the fight for social and economic justice. Since our formation, we've experienced many triumphs that have worked in bettering our community. In the past year alone we've celebrated some amazing wins, including:

- A pay increase implemented for fast food workers which will incrementally reach \$15 by 2021
- A minimum wage increase for all other workers to \$12.50 upstate by 2021
- Verizon workers finally being able to step off the picket line, after a long 44 days, resulting in huge gains, such as pay raises, creation of jobs, job security and more.

Your support has made it possible for us to continue the fight for economic justice over the past 30 years, and has undoubtedly played a huge role in many successes. We truly couldn't do it without your help. Thank you again for all that you do for the CEJ. We're sure that we will have many more years to come, and will continue to achieve countless victories for workers and for our community. The fight is far from over, and we will not give up until we have justice.

In Solidarity,

Rev. Kirk Laubenstein

Coalition for Economic Justice

Retiree Thanks BTF For Dinner, Certificate

Thank you for a most enjoyable and memorable BTF retirement dinner on May 17th at Salvatore's.

The meal was fabulous and the camaraderie with fellow retirees felt more like a grand wedding reception than the retirement party!

The beautifully framed certificate looks absolutely beautiful!!

Phil, thank you for all your years of service, in helping countless retirees like me achieve a comfortable future.

God Bless you all!

Teresa Jurmerz, retired

Teacher of Hearing Impaired

Lily Eskelsen Garcia Re-elected President of NEA During Convention

The 95th NEA Representative got underway July 4th with a remembrance of the 49 people who lost their lives June 12 in the Pulse nightclub shootings in Orlando, Fl.

As the delegation stood in silence, the names were read and 49 educators, each carrying a photo of one of the people killed in the shooting, walked to the front of the stage.

“We will not begin without honoring those who lost their lives for no other reason than that they were gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender,” NEA President Lily Eskelsen Garcia informed the delegates. “Today, we mourn with Orlando.”

“There’s a real world out there, and it’s not a safe place. It’s dangerous, and the work we’ll do in this safe place is important, because it has the chance to change the world out there. That dangerous world needs us,” Eskelsen Garcia said in her keynote address. “We’re living under a toxic, choking environment where entire groups of people are demonized, targeted and terrorized.”

The National Education Association (NEA) Representative Assembly was held July 3-8 in Washington, DC.

BTF President Philip Rumore attended the convention along with the following delegates: Lynn Diagostino, Lynn Garcia, Melinda MacPherson-Sullivan, Sue Raichilson, Chris Salamone and Cathleen Stearns.

During the Representative Assembly, Eskelsen Garcia was re-elected to another 3-year term as president; Rebecca Pringle was re-elected vice president; and Princess Moss was re-elected secretary-treasurer.

The guest speaker was Hillary Clinton, who made the rounds of Teacher conventions addressing the NYSUT Representative Assembly in Rochester in April and the AFT convention in Minneapolis in late July.

In her address July 5 to the RA, Clinton spotlighted her priorities for public education, vowing to elevate the teaching profession, de-emphasize standardized testing, and harness community resources to help create great public schools for every student regardless of Zip code. And it’s time to stop the war on teachers, Clinton told the delegates.

Clinton promised the delegates if she is elected president, teachers will



Lynn Garcia, left; Lily Eskelsen Garcia, center; Sue Raichelson, right



Buffalo delegation at NEA RA



NYSUT Delegation

have a voice in the White House.

“We have no time for the so-called “education wars.” No time for finger pointing, or arguing over who cares about kids more. It’s time to set one table and sit around it together – all of us – so we can work together to do what’s best for America’s children,” she said.

“Fixing problems like these will take all of us, working together – from the community level all the way up to the presidency,” she added.

During the Representative Assembly, the delegates acted on more than 125 new business items and resolutions. For more information on action taken during the convention, visit the NEA website at <http://neatoday.org/2016/07/07/ra-wrap-up/>.

Clinton Speaks At AFT Convention

Participants in the 84th convention of the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) reviewed more than 125 new business items, and resolutions and numerous amendments to the constitution, bylaws and standing rules.

The convention held July 18 – 21, in Minneapolis, Minnesota, was attended by 13 BTF members, including President Phil Rumore and Treasurer Rebecca Pordum.

The other BTF members who attended the convention were:

Roger Aumick
Lucille Emmi
Lynn Garcia
Phyllis Mays
Susan McNamara
Mark Mecca
Michael Mecca
M. Sue Raichilson
Chris Salamone
Susan Schwartz
Cathleen Stearns

A highlight of the convention was the guest appearance of Hillary Clinton on opening day.

Speaking to a packed hall of more than 3,000 delegates, Clinton said real school improvement requires the voices, talent and buy in from the professionals who are on the front lines.

“I want to thank you for being one of the essential partners for everything

we need to do to move the country in the right direction,” Clinton said.

“When I’m president, you will have a partner in the White House, and you will always have a seat at the table.”

AFT President Randi Weingarten introduced Clinton at the session and pointed to a quarter-century of close work with her. Weingarten said Clinton has the “compassion, courage and the commitment it takes to achieve real-world change.”

Among the topics covered at the convention were:

- Economic inclusion of immigrants
- Defeating the global movement to privatize education
- End of garnishment of Social Security to pay student loan debt
- Promoting the expansion of SNAP eligibility to graduate employees
- Support more accurate COLA adjustments to Social Security
- No more Flints: Stop childhood lead poisoning

For more information on the convention, visit the AFT website at: <http://www.aft.org/convention>.



Social Committee Seeks Ideas For Family Fun Events

The BTF Social Committee is seeking ideas for family social events, such as baseball outings, picnics, zoo day, etc.

If you have any suggestions, complete the following form and mail it to Luci Emmi, c/o BTF Social Committee, 271 Porter Ave., Buffalo, NY 14201.

BTF Members Attend NYSUT Summer Leadership Conference

A three-day Summer Leadership Conference, sponsored by the New York State United Teachers, (NYSUT), was attended by 219 educators and school support staff from Western New York.

The conference, held at the Peek 'n Peak ski resort, in Clymer, NY, was held Aug. 17-19.

Among those attending the conference were 17 BTF members, including President Philip Rumore and Treasurer Rebecca Pordum.

Also attending the meeting were: Sue Raichilson, Sophia Howard Johnson, Lynn Garcia, Nicole Herkey, Gregg Sawicki, Eve Shippens, Ruyvette Townsend, Chris Salamone, Rachel Lis, Jeanne Cummings, Emily Ostroff, Christopher Stephens, Trisha Rosokoff, Melissa Kenney, Maryann Favata and Barbara Bogdan.

Attendance at the conference, which was financed through a National Education Association (NEA) grant, was offered to members of the BTF Executive Committee and building representatives recommended by the NYSUT Labor Relations Specialists.

The conference got underway with remarks by Michael Deely, NYSUT Regional Director; Martin Messner, NYSUT Secretary-Treasurer; Jim Larson, NYSUT Legislative Representative; and Richard Lipsitz, president of the WNY Area Labor Federation.

The remainder of the conference was divided into 90-minute workshops, designed to provide information on union-related issues.

The workshops included the following topics:

- Advanced Union Representative Training for experienced leaders
- Union Representative Training for new reps
- Creating a Successful New

Member Program

- Defeating Apathy
- Negotiations: Using Transparency & Inclusion as Negotiating Tools
- Preparing for Continuing Legal Threats on Labor
- You Be The Judge, in which participants tried to determine the outcome of grievances
- Health & Safety (Sick Buildings)
- Legal Update for on-going cases
- Member Benefits
- Special Education Update
- Using Social Media to Engage

Members

- ED Director Cracker Barrel, which discussed the hierarchy of NYSUT

BTF Committees Being Formed

With the school year underway, BTF committees are preparing this year's activities. If you are interested in serving on a committee, please complete the form below and return it in the PONY, US Mail, or fax to the BTF, 881-6678. Most committees are open although a few have limited spaces.

BTF committees include:

- Communication/Technology
- Community Engagement
- Educators of Special Education
- Ethnic Minority Involvement
- Finance
- Grievance
- Instructional and Professional Development
- Membership
- Political Action
- *Provocator*
- Public Relations
- Retirement Dinner/Workshop
- SBF Trustees

- Sick Leave Bank
 - Social
 - Teacher Center Policy Board
- Joint Committees:
- Athletic Program Improvement Initiatives
 - Study of Class Size

Name: _____

Cell phone: _____

Suggestion: _____

Name: _____

Phone: _____

Personal email: _____

Committees interested in:

Please return to BTF c/o Edith LeWin or email Hazel Beharry at hbeharry@btfny.org

Thousands Rally For New Contract



An estimated 2,000 - 3,000 Buffalo teachers and their supporters from surrounding school districts and several hundred of their local labor unions, rallied Sept. 28 outside City Hall for a new teacher contract.

The overflowing crowd, which stopped traffic in Niagara Square, was one of the largest BTF Solidarity Rallies in history. Among the BTF supporters were NYSUT President Karen Magee, State Senator Tim Kennedy, WNY/ALF President Richard Lipsitz, BCSA President Crystal Barton, BEST President JoAnn Sweat, Substitute United President Jeffrey Hicks, Aaron Armstrong President of PCTEA and other central office and principals including Marianne Dixon, Diane Andreana, Ann Fitzgerald, Heath Frisch and Michael Gruber.

The rally, which had been scheduled for several weeks, ironically came a day after negotiations once again stalled when the district team said they were not prepared to offer a counter proposal to the one made by the BTF at the previous meeting and presented a document with a \$2,500 bonus for perfect attendance as if it was salary for all teachers.

BTF President Phil Rumore said negotiations had been going well, and he was hopeful a settlement was near, when the district stalled negotiations. No new talks are scheduled. Teachers have not had a new contract since their old one expired 12 years ago.

"Twelve years is too long," Rumore said. "What is on the table is an insult."

Rumore said the school board received a negotiations presentation at the board meeting following the rally "that was filled with half-truths and omissions." A copy of the presentation was emailed to BTF members.

He said he has requested to be on the agenda of the next board meeting on Oct. 12 to "respond and correct each and every insulting, misleading and wrong statement" in that report.

Rumore praised teachers for their dedication and solidarity.

"You are amazing. There are no more dedicated and unified teachers anywhere. Stay Strong, Stay United. We will achieve a contract that is commensurate with your dedication and importance to our students."



BTF Raises More Than \$3,000 For Breast Cancer Research

More than \$3,000 was raised for the Making Strides Against Breast Cancer Walk held October 15 at Canalside.

A theme basket raffle and a 50/50 drawing during a Council of Delegates meeting contributed to the total. Baskets for the raffle were made and donated by members of the Executive Board.

Rachel Lis and Ruyvette Townsend were co-chairmen of the Cancer Walk. Sue Raichilson and Lynn Garcia helped with registration of walkers and runners.



Nearly 100 Attend BTF Delegate Leadership Workshop

Nearly 100 BTF Delegates, Alternates and Building Committee members spent a major portion of their weekend October 28-29 learning about the contract and how to serve its membership.

The annual BTF Delegate Leadership Workshop, was held in the Adam's Mark Hotel in Buffalo.

Attendees reviewed the contract and learned how to deal with issues facing teachers in Buffalo Schools.

The Workshop got underway Friday with comments and review of the contract by BTF President Philip Rumore and an update on legal issues by NYSUT Attorney Claire Sellers.

"I want to sincerely thank you for taking part of your weekend to help fellow teachers in your schools," Rumore told the crowd.

On Saturday, a variety of workshops were offered for new and veteran representatives.

NYSUT Labor Relations Specialists Deana Fox and Dennis Licherelli and NYSUT Labor

Organizer Louisa Fletcher Pacheco presented the session for the veteran representatives. They discussed the steps taken throughout the past year that resulted in the recent settlement of the new contract and urged the attendees to actively campaign for NYSUT/BTF endorsed candidates.

They also discussed union apathy and ways to get more members actively involved. Attendees created action plans to take back to their schools.

New representatives attended workshops on Building Committee and Grievance Procedures conducted by Phil and NYSUT Labor Relations Specialist Nick Whitman.





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Nadia N. Shahram, Esq.
Attorney and Divorce
Financial Specialist

Tel: (716) 565-1299
attorneynadia@gmail.com

Children's Thanks BTF For Support

Thank you for your faithful support of Children's Hospital. We want to recognize your generosity and extend our appreciation to you for your donation.

We are pleased to let you know that in the very near future, our nationally ranked programs and services will find a new home on the Buffalo Medical Campus with plans unfolding for *The John R. Oishei Children's Hospital* – the first in more than 120 years.

Your gifts help Children's Hospital sustain life-saving programs and services by providing the best technology and equipment and all the special little touches that combine to heal our children. Because of your support, all children in Western New York will continue to receive compassionate, expert care in a state-of-the-art facility.

Sincerely,
Elsie Dawe, vice president

BTF Donates To Houghton Academy

We would like to thank the BTF for its generous donation to our school. Your donation of \$100 will enable students to go on field trips that will enhance their learning experience.

We are planning a field trip for our Good Citizen students to attend the UniverSoul Circus at the Outer Harbor. Your donation will help with the entrance fee.

Thanks again, for caring and supporting our students.

Sincerely,
Elaine Vandt Kirkland, principal
Houghton Academy #69
Octavia Kpukumu, fundraiser rep.

RUMORE CONTROL
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Provocator To Highlight Teachers

Are you involved in a community project, publishing a book or traveling to an exotic location? Have you won an award, been honored or elected to a post? If so, share your good news and accomplishments with your colleagues. The *Provocator* will highlight Buffalo Public School teachers in each of its editions. If you would like share your news, complete the following form and email the information to salamone426@aol.com.

Name _____

School/position: _____

Personal Email _____

Phone _____

Announcement _____

Provocator To Promote School News

If there is an event at your school, a field trip or something your students are doing in class that you would like to share with the *Provocator*, we want to hear from you. Email stories and photos to salamone426@aol.com. All submissions become the property of the *Provocator*.


Name _____

School _____


Personal Email _____

Phone _____


Description of Event _____



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