



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Velmanette Montgomery

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For immediate release: March 3, 2020

Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins, Assembly Speaker Carl Heastie, Senate and Assembly Education Committee Chairs Shelley Mayer and Michael Benedetto, and Senate and Assembly Higher Education Committee Chairs Toby Ann Stavisky and Deborah Glick today announced the Legislature's election of

Dr. Frances G. Wills and re-election of Dr. Kathleen M. Cashin, Beverly L. Ouderkirk, Dr. Catherine Collins, Roger Tilles and Dr. Lester W. Young, Jr. to the New York State Board of Regents.

The Board is comprised of 17 members elected by the legislature for five year terms. One member is elected from each of the state's 13 judicial districts and four members serve at-large.

"Our students deserve access to world class educational opportunities, and having stability and experience within the Board of Regents will help advance that goal," Senate Majority Leader Stewart-Cousins said. "I congratulate Dr. Frances Wills on her election to the Board of Regents, and the five Regents who were re-elected today. The Senate Democratic Majority will continue to work with our Assembly colleagues to advance our shared goal of empowering all New York students with a high quality education."

"Having experienced and skilled individuals serving on the Board of Regents is critical for continuing our mission of academic excellence and accessibility in New York State," said Assembly Speaker Heastie. "The regents elected today embody a dedication to leading our education system to ensure all students have access to a quality education."

Senator Mayer said, "Congratulations to Dr. Frances G. Wills on her election to the Board of Regents for the 9th Judicial District. I look forward to working with Dr. Wills to advance education equity for all students, and after meeting with her, I am encouraged by her commitment to use her voice to advocate for the underserved and to listen to all the students, parents, and educators in the district.

Congratulations also to the five distinguished members of the board on their re-election. The Board of Regents is one of the most important and consequential leadership positions in the state, and I look forward to continuing to work with them to provide a quality education for every child. Thank you to all of the members of the board for their service on behalf of New York's children, teachers, parents, and school districts."

"Today's election of six regents reaffirms New York's commitment to academic excellence and providing a quality and accessible education to all New York students," said Assemblymember Benedetto.

Senator Stavisky said, “The Board of Regents is the policy-making body that ensures academic excellence and access to a quality education across New York State. In addition, they select the Commission of Education. The Regents re-elected today, as well as the new appointment of Dr. Frances Wills, demonstrate the leadership and knowledge needed to continue New York’s commitment to providing a world-class education for all New York students.”

“The regents elected today exemplify excellence in academic leadership and bring the necessary experience for the advancement of all New York students,” said Assemblymember Deborah Glick. “The re-election of five members and election of one new member to the Board of Regents renews New York’s pledge to continue improving our education system.”

**Dr. Kathleen M. Cashin** (Judicial District 2) has served the students of New York City with distinction for over 35 years as a teacher, superintendent and regional superintendent. She has dedicated herself to educating children and ensuring that every child receives an equal opportunity to develop into a caring, contributing member of society. As a superintendent, Dr. Cashin was named “Distinguished Educator of the Year” by the New York City Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, and as a regional superintendent, served as a member of the deputy chancellor for Teaching and Learning’s senior team, which was responsible for successful instructional changes across the city. In addition, she served as CEO of Knowledge Network Learning Support Organization. She currently co-chairs the Board of Regents Higher Education Committee and College, Career and Civic Readiness Work Group.

**Beverly L. Ouderkirk** (Judicial District 4) began her professional career as a kindergarten teacher. She continued teaching for 17 years in various elementary and special education classrooms in the Jordan-Elbridge and Weedsport Central School Districts as well as for the Onondaga-Cayuga BOCES. She served as elementary principal, director of elementary education, Committee on the Handicapped chair and deputy superintendent in the Gouverneur Central School District (CSD) and was superintendent of schools at Morristown CSD, Tioga CSD and Valley CSD before becoming a BOCES district superintendent at Genesee Valley in Western New York. Following her first retirement, Ouderkirk served four additional districts as an interim superintendent over a 10-year period. The culminating activity of her long career was as a shared superintendent for the St. Regis Falls and Brushton-Moira Central School Districts, a first in New York State. She currently co-

chairs the Board of Regents Subcommittee on State Aid and Adult Career and Continuing Education Services Committee.

**Dr. Catherine Collins** (Judicial District 8) has dedicated much of her personal and professional life to promoting the twin issues of good health and a sound education, with a special emphasis on the needs of underserved youth, women and individuals in western New York. She is the author and editor of over 13 published books and has held positions as school nurse, practical nursing instructor, director/instructor of a registered nursing program, executive director of the University at Buffalo's Offices of Preparatory Programs, coordinator/instructor at University at Buffalo's Educational Opportunity Center's certified nursing assistant program, and assistant academic dean for allied health education and directory ambulatory care at Erie Community College. She also served for five years on the Buffalo City School District board of education and held several board positions. She currently co-chairs the Board of Regents Higher Education Committee.

**Dr. Frances G. Wills** (Judicial District 9) has served as superintendent of schools for the Briarcliff Manor Union Free School District and most recently for the Putnam Valley Central School District. Prior to her experience in New York, she served in a variety of positions in the Maine School Administrative District for over 10 years. She has also served as an adjunct faculty member at a number of universities and authored several articles relating to educational issues.

**Roger Tilles** (Judicial District 10) became director of law and legislation for the Michigan Department of Education, was elected to the Michigan State Board of Education and in 1975, became the executive secretary to the Speaker of the Michigan House of Representatives. During his time in Michigan, he taught education and law at the University of Michigan, Michigan State, Eastern Michigan and Central Michigan University. He was also the counsel to the Michigan Teacher Tenure Commission, as well as a special education hearing officer. Tilles opened his own law practice in Washington D.C., until his return to Long Island where he was the director of the Tilles Investment Companies. He served as chair and a founding member of the Association for a Better Long Island, past acting chair of the Long Island Regional Planning Board, chair of the Long Island University Board of Trustees, on the Boards of WNET/Channel 13 and WLIW/Channel 21, and has been executive vice chairman of the Tilles Center For The Performing Arts, in addition to serving on the Board and Executive Board of the Long Island Association. He has also worked to form the Long Island Arts Alliance, attempting to bring together the cultural institutions of Long

Island. He currently co-chairs the Board of Regents Cultural Education Committee.

**Dr. Lester W. Young, Jr.** (At-Large) has served the students of New York City for 35 years as a teacher, principal, community superintendent, senior superintendent, guidance counselor and supervisor of special education. During his tenure as principal, the General Daniel “Chappie” James Jr. School, (PS 183 CSD 23 Brooklyn) was recognized as a School of Excellence by the United States Department of Education and the New York State Education Department (NYSED). As a community superintendent, he established some of the more successful high schools and middle schools in New York City and replicated the nationally recognized Algebra Project and Comer School Development Program. Dr. Young also served as senior superintendent, coordinating services in four central Brooklyn community school districts. He also established and led the first New York City Office of Youth Development and School Community Services. In addition, Dr. Young served in the positions of assistant and associate commissioner of education under Commissioner Thomas Sobel and led the department’s efforts in New York City. He currently co-chairs the Board of Regents P-12 Education Committee and Early Childhood Workgroup and chairs the Regents Workgroup to Improve Outcomes for Boys and Young Men of Color.

The Board of Regents was established in 1784 and is the oldest, continuous state education entity in the United States. Regents are responsible for the general oversight of all educational activities within the state, presiding over The University of the State of New York and the State Education Department.