



LINKAGE

The Newsletter of Retiree Council 18
New York State United Teachers



Retiree Council 18 Represents Retirees From: Baldwin, East Rockaway, Elmont Elementary, Floral Park-Bellerose, Franklin Square, Freeport, Hempstead, Hewlett-Woodmere, Island Park, Lawrence, Long Beach, Lynbrook, Malverne, New Hyde Park-Garden City Park, Oceanside, Rockville Centre, Sewanhaka, Uniondale, Valley Stream, West Hempstead, and the Woodward Children’s Center
May-June 2020 Edition

President’s Corner, by Barbara Keilty
Public Education at Jeopardy, Vote June 9th

Governor Cuomo has set a new date for school district budget votes and made changes to how potential school board members can get on the ballot. Executive Order 202.26 also eliminates the need for candidates to get signatures on a nominating petition in order to run for a seat on the board. Instead, individuals just need to declare their candidacy, provided they "meet any other requirements necessary to be placed on the ballot, including any applicable residency and age requirements." Mail-in ballots will arrive soon.

This order from the Governor puts our districts on the road to disaster. With the amount of people furloughed, unemployed, with limited financial resources, keeping bills down has become a priority as a result of the pandemic. School budgets passing will be jeopardized. Yes, our educators and essential workers in our school systems have gone above and beyond, working well beyond a normal school day. They are thanked everyday! Parents have realized how hard teaching is. However, school budgets will be looked at as a financial burden.

Changing the rules for candidates submitting their names for board seats opens Pandora’s box for many districts, especially those where anti-public school residents are increasing. No candidate forums, no knowledge of who these candidates are puts our school boards in jeopardy of being taken over by those who are pro-private schools and charter schools. This can change the dynamics of what money goes to public education locally. Districts are already stressed financially.

Annual budget votes are not at 100%. The convenience of mail-in ballots will surely change the outcome. Apathy has been changed to conscious resentment of higher taxes, especially from those who have lost their jobs. The budget votes, in my opinion, will increase in the negative. Candidates elected without any public contact and ability to question their focus and goals is frightening.

No doubt our Governor’s leadership in this health crisis is unwavering, New York Strong is his mantra. Beware! He is NOT a friend to public education. The powers given to him during this time have opened the door to the demise of public education. His Executive Order 202.26 proves it. This is his opportunity to get people on our boards who are ultra-conservatives-anti-public-school residents who will further attempt to rein in budget spending. Districts are looking at massive monetary cuts, staff cuts, and program cuts now.

Public education run by pro-public advocates is in jeopardy. Governor Cuomo has accepted Bill Gates’ offer to “reinvent education.” Distant learning isn’t the future for public education; it is a short-term alternative to keep students engaged. There is so much more to everyday life in schools. Children are disconnected from normalcy; many will show effects from this for years to come.

As retirees, our medical insurance is from our former districts. If public schools disappear, what would happen to our insurance and any other benefits we carry through our locals? Another scenario would perhaps be paying insurance at 100%, because we are under Civil Service rule as state government employees. Who knows what truly could happen?

Our schools are strapped for money, and some are preparing to reduce staff and services to balance their budgets. District contracts protect wages, benefits, and employee rights but not districts excessing and program cuts. Everyone is affected by this pandemic. We are so fortunate to have our defined benefit (our pension) and earned benefit (Social Security).

The President wants a payroll tax cut. Are you aware that this is what feeds Social Security? Putting a few dollars back in the working classes’ paycheck will affect retirees today and in the future.

Social Security benefits will be diminished. What is lost will never be replenished in the future. Look for your district’s mail-in ballot. Keep public education alive! Help colleagues keep their jobs. The same was done for us. It may be difficult to pay a bit more in taxes; however, we are advocates for public education! Cast your ‘Yes’ vote for those candidates who support public education and ‘Yes’ for your school budget.

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• Please Note: Welcome new retirees from your local. We won’t be able to distribute the *Retiree Handbook* •
• and *Your Blueprint for Successful Retirement Planning*. They’re available at <NYSUT.org>. •
• AND... In case you missed the NYSUT Webinars they can also be found at <NYSUT.org>. •
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Early Spring Happenings in Albany

NYSUT’s Virtual RA, May 14th

In March, NYSUT delegates and alternates assembled in Albany for Committee of 100, which has grown to over 700. This year, Toni Vitelli and June Innella joined me for this two-day meeting. As retirees, we focused on retaining our Medicare reimbursements, which the Governor annually puts on the chopping block of his proposed budget. Our state representatives are always on our side. Once again, it was taken out of the budget proposals.

We annually attend these meetings at the Capitol with many other retirees and inservice activists. Sadly, the list increases every year. Lack of foundation aide, tax-cap, increase in mandates, are heavy burdens on our colleagues. The tax cap has affected inservice and retirees. Our elected officials were surprised to hear some retirees on Long Island had lost NYSHIP insurance as a direct effect of the tax cap. Districts continue to look for inventive ways of saving money. In those districts, retirees paid the price.

A topic which has been discussed for years - “tax the wealthy millionaires and billionaires.” How ironic this is! No one in Albany would discuss this as an avenue for supporting educational funding. Yet, this week, newspapers printed lengthy articles about Albany being interested in going this route! Even the Patriotic Millionaires are supporting this idea. If you aren’t familiar with this group, just Google them. They are in full support of having their taxes increased to support our country’s needs.

Immediately following the Committee of 100, ED 52, our retiree ED (election district), which includes Long Island retiree councils, Florida, Westchester, UUP, and community colleges met for our spring meeting. Various discussions on election procedures, concerns in Florida, and the future for retirees were focused on. We watched a wonderful video done by Tony Bifaro, a retired NYSUT officer, about the history of organizing unions based on his personal experiences.

The day after we returned from Albany our world was turned upside down. COVID-19 became our new norm!

To reinvent how we do business has been interesting. NYSUT plans our governing convention years in advance. The Representative Assembly was planned for the end of April in Albany. Several thousand attend annually, booking hotel rooms, planning dinner arrangements, how and with whom each is traveling to an fro. Suddenly, all plans are no more. Our NYSUT Officers and Board of Directors went into high speed working on an alternative. Compounding all, this year was an election year for NYSUT. In the history of NYSUT, this has never happened. An amendment to our constitution had to be quickly addressed in order to be able to have mail-in-ballot voting by our delegates. If we were able to vote by mail-in ballots annually, whether it be for officers, resolutions, and/or amendments, there would be no formal meeting of our union governance. As union delegates, we only meet as a whole once per year at the RA. The effects of COVID-19 has shown us how our federal, state, and local governments are so disrupted.

NYSUT set up a Virtual Convention. It was very modified and it lasted only 45 minutes. Every delegate had the opportunity to be part of it. NYSUT President Andy Pallotta spoke about many issues we have been aware of concerning education and COVID-19’s effect on all aspects of it. All resolutions which were to be debated and voted on are being referred to the Board of Directors.

Because our NYSUT officers were running uncontested, it became easier for us. Paul Pecorale has returned to his Long Island roots, with Ron Gross now becoming NYSUT’s 2nd VP. This position is important to us; retirees are represented by this officer. We welcome him attending and being an integral part of retiree councils.

There are several contested elections, including our ED 52 Director position. In order to vote, our delegates will soon receive mail-in ballots. Our present ED 52 Director, Rosemary Catanzariti, is being challenged by Barbara Hafner, retired President of West Hempstead Education Association and a member of our retiree council.

Any other contested elections throughout NYSUT will take place in the same manner. Because ballots need to be counted, results probably won’t be available until the end of June. All election results will be in NYSUT United.



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• *REMEMBER TO:* •
• *Return Your Census Form* •
• *& Absentee Ballot* •
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Thank You

During these unprecedented times and in the face of incredible adversity, each of you continue to sacrifice and dedicate yourselves to our children, our families and our communities.

We thank all of the educators, school-related professionals, nurses and other health care workers who continue to demonstrate their unwavering compassion, dedication and commitment to our communities on a daily basis.

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For information about contractual endorsement arrangements with providers of endorsed programs, please contact NYSUT Member Benefits.

May/June '20

CHAPTER PRESIDENTS/ REPS:

Baldwin- Mary Fallica- mfallica@optonline.net
East Rockaway- no chapter
Elmont Elementary- Elaine Mitchell- em4784@optonline.net
Floral Park-Bellerose- Val Lucas- Vall62@aol.com
Eileen Griffiths- EGmusic@aol.com
Franklin Square- no chapter
Freeport- Pat Belfi- pbelfi@optonline.net
Hempstead- Cheryl Goodridge- cheryl.goodridge@gmail.com
Hewlett-Woodmere- Jane Binkoff- jbinkoff@aol.com
Island Park- Barbara Gould- bgould12@verizon.net
Lawrence- Helen Pater- HMP131@aol.com

Long Beach- Frank Volpe- Zvolpe@optonline.net
Lynbrook- Dave Ajello- Dajello@LynbrookLTA.org
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New Hyde Park- Garden City Park- no chapter
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Rockville Centre- Mary Schmidt- rvcrta@gmail.com
Sewanhaka- Maddy Maffatore- Maddymaff@aol.com
Uniondale- Dolores Spagnoli- doloresspag@aol.com
Valley Stream- no chapter
West Hempstead- Ron Huetter- ronhuetter@hotmail.com
Bev Visconti- Blv210@yahoo.com
Woodward Children's Center- no chapter

☆ **RC18 Board of Directors:** ☆

President: Barbara Keilty-Michaleski
Vice President: Guy Jacob
Treasurer: June Innella
Corresponding Secretary: Emily Schreiber
Recording Secretary: Maddy Maffetore
NYSUT Delegates: Barbara Keilty-Michaleski, Toni Vitelli and Thomas Cook
NYSUT Alternates: June Innella and Guy Jacob
AFT Alternate: Virginia Levine
Newsletter Editor: Emily Schreiber

Calendar of Events

SEE YOU IN AUTUMN!

RC 18 Meetings - 9:45 a.m. - Noon

NEW LOCATION: at the Uniondale Library, 400 Uniondale Ave., Uniondale, NY 11553.

Future (tentative!) Meeting Dates: 9/21, 10/19, 11/16, 12/21

No meetings will be held in January and February.

The dates for 2021 to be determined.

INVITE FELLOW RETIREES!

Questions/concerns to: <bkeiltymic@aol.com>

Claire Zatorski, NYSUT Nassau Retiree Services Consultant
e-mail: Claire.Zatorski@nysut.org
Nassau Regional Office Phone: 516-496-2035

Medicare Reimbursements for 2019 (NYSHIP Insurance holders), by Barbara Keilty

It is your responsibility to hand in your 2019 Social Security tax statement (SSA-1099) or copies of your Medicare premium bills (if you have chosen not to take Social security but are 65+, or on disability social security) to your district health insurance administrator.

The Part B rate was :\$135.50 per month, plus IRMAA if your income exceeded \$85,000 (single) or \$170,000 (family) as is reported on your taxable income listed on your tax papers 2 years prior (2017). Married, hand in both SSA-1099s if both are on the same NYSHIP policy. There is no reimbursement for the Part D drug plan (SILVERSCRIPT - which is part of NYSHIP).

KEEP RECORDS and COPIES!

Anyone on Medicare should have received 2020 premium notices for such from Social Security. The 2020 Part B base is \$144.60 for all. The additional, if any is IRMAA and the drug plan. Individual taxable income has risen to \$87,000 (single) and \$174,000 (family) for the 2018 year.

Keeping in Touch !

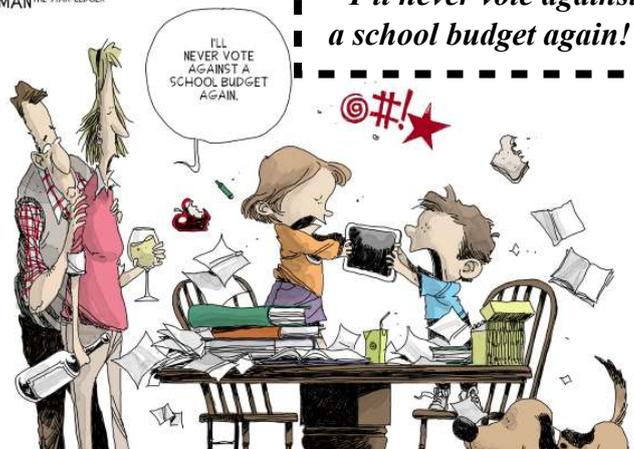
Through these months of isolation, retirees have been resilient. Accolades to all! Whether you've connected with others through phone calls, emails, FaceTime, Zoom, Instagram, Twitter, or some other form, you've shown tenacity. Drive-by's for friends, healthcare workers, frontline volunteers, birthdays, graduations have delighted our communities. We have learned to live a simpler life, eating all our meals, including those extra snack sessions. Real conversations are an everyday norm. Kindness and concern for others have come to the forefront. Let's not let these actions disappear. They have made our world a better place.

For those who survived COVID-19, we are grateful. For those who lost family or friends, may all Rest In Peace. Living through 9-11 made us strong. This pandemic has proven the strength we continue to carry within us.

As our country slowly tries to regain the life we lived just a few months ago, find time to smell the flowers. Continue to follow the guidelines. New words have been added to our vocabulary: COVID-19, new normal, social distancing, self-isolation, PPE, elbow bump, WFH, and others I can't remember! Let's not forget how simple words have changed our lives forever.

Wear your mask. Be responsible for your actions. What you do or don't do, affects others.

SHENEMAN THE STAR-LEDGER



Make Your Vote Count!