

RC 10 SKYLINE NEWS



NYSUT Retiree Council 10

Serving Over 9000 Members in Albany, Rensselaer, Saratoga and Washington Counties

TEACHER UNION SOLIDARITY

E-ISSUE 1 for October 2017-18

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**TO UPDATE YOUR
PERSONAL CONTACT
INFORMATION,
CALL NYSUT MEMBER
RECORDS (518) 213-6000**

From Your President:

Election time is just around the corner. Soon ads will be filling your TV screens and newspapers. Many, of course, are "Vote for me" types. But this year, as we all know, there is another campaign and it is one calling for a Constitutional Convention to change the NY State Constitution. The occurrence of such a vote is required to be held by the present constitution. It does not require that we actually do it, only that we have a chance to vote on that referendum.

What is at stake for us if we do hold such a convention? Presently when we have a question on the ballot about changing the existing document, we know the issue and can make a choice to do it or not. When we vote for a Constitutional Convention, we are agreeing to let others make any changes they want and put together things as they like with things that might hurt us, and we say take it or leave it all. Once the door is open anything may be changed. There is no part of the constitution as it now exists that cannot be altered or deleted. Michael Andrew of RC 21 recently wrote, *"Democracy is based upon the intellectual debate of ideas and the resulting compromises that both sides of the debate make."* He sure got that right! Will your pension security be a victim of compromise? Will the Adirondack forest preserve be lost to a back-room deal? Will organizing rights for workers be lost to compromise? How long a list of such deals will have us all losing in the end?

Some of us believe Federal law, not the state constitution, really protects our pension. Recently the Teamsters in our state faced a demand to cut existing pensions. Those members who voted for the most part said no. But those who did not vote were counted as yes votes **by federal law**. It passed, 1,000 votes no to 29,000 nonvoters counted as yes. That is federal law at work. Does it work for you? Ask a Teamster retiree how that federal protection worked for him.

Are you willing to let a future legislature reduce an already retired worker's pension? Our present constitution makes that impossible. They can create new plans but not take away existing ones. That is why we have tier 2 and tier 3, etc. Those in existing tiers could not have their benefits reduced after they had already earned that benefit. No Federal law prevented that. Our state constitution did and continues to do so--unless we allow a convention that can change the rule. That lets someone play let's make a deal in some smoke-filled room, at our expense. That resulting package of good and bad will be pushed for the good in it, and the bad will be overlooked or seen as your problem, not my problem.

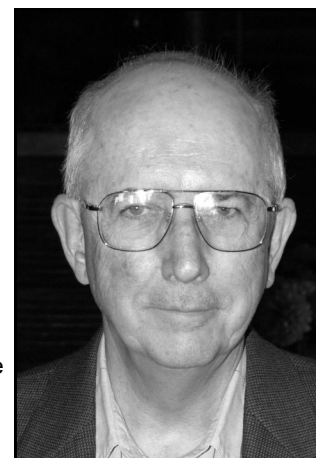
"This time the question is on the back of the ballot, not the front. If you don't look for it, you will lose your chance to vote on it."

~Dave Golden

without helping to pay their share of the cost of getting them? If you get it for free, who will pay. If no one has to pay, who will do the work to get or continue the benefits? Everyone employed loses out when that happens. By the time you realize what you were getting for your dues, you won't have the benefits to protect.

We have the Blaine Amendment in the New York State Constitution that prohibits expenditures of public funds in support of religious schools. Some folks want public funding for their faith and not the other person's faith. The impact of that law looks quite different now. That has traditionally been a debate between mostly Christian and Judaic religious enthusiasts. Now we have the added presence of Islamic students and some of those of their faith that want state supported schools to raise their children in sharia traditions. But in America, everyone is treated the same. We all get a benefit or no one gets it. If we open that door, we have no way of knowing who will walk through it. We all share government support for all faiths or we all support our own faith.

Should the legislature have input into what goes into the state budget, or do they just say yes or no to whatever the Governor puts there. What is the budget price of a legislative vote becoming the real question? Present law has weakened the role of the Legislature in drafting state budgets. Should we end the division of power principle that maintains the balance between Executive, Legislative and Judicial in NY? It can be done away with entirely if we open the Constitution. Should a back room deal at a convention be permitted to change that?



DAVID GOLDEN

Do you want the legislature to reduce workers compensation payments already granted, just because they want to make some money available to some other cause? Can't do that right now, but some folks want to do that in the future and so they support a convention where their money talks.

Do you want to lose agency fee and have some free loaders get the benefits and pay that you worked for

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SAVE THESE DATES—TRAVEL AND SOCIAL CALENDAR!!!!

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 25, JOY BEAR PROJECT. RC 10 will hold another Joy Bear Workshop from 10 to 12 at NYSUT on Route 7 in Latham. Joy Bears are decorated teddy bears that are given to cancer patients to provide comfort as they undergo chemo treatment. It is the hope of the project to get dozens of bears decorated and delivered to cancer patients. This project only asks you for your time. All materials are provided free of cost. You do not need to be a long-time craft person to make a Joy Bear. If you have craft supplies (thread, lace, ribbon) that you would like to donate, please bring them with you. New teddy bears would also be greatly appreciated. Bring a friend or two to help us complete these much appreciated bears. To sign up, please contact Ann Cherney at acherne1@nycap.rr.com or call 982-1923 after 3 p.m. Please help! If you know of a person undergoing treatment for cancer, please contact rc10secretary@hotmail.com and a bear will be sent to that person.

MARCH 25 TO MARCH 30, 2018, OUT AND ABOUT IN NEW ORLEANS: JAZZ, JAMBALAYA, AND JOIE DEVIVRE. Please contact Karen Maher, kmaher2@nycap.rr.com or 518-477-6746 or 518-588-4083. She is presently taking names for a waiting list.

APRIL 16-26, 2018, ESSENTIAL HOLLAND: TULIPS IN SPRING. THIS TRIP IS FILLED.

OCTOBER 21 TO OCTOBER 26, 2018, SANTA FE AND TAOS: A TALE OF TWO CITIES. Only some of the highlights of our itinerary will include wonderful collections of pottery, weaving, baskets, jewelry, paintings only seen by the public via special invitation at the Indian Arts Research Center and a lecture about the life and art of Georgia O'Keeffe and a tour of her museum. We'll spend a day in Taos and visit Taos Pueblo, the only living Native American community designated both a World Heritage Site by UNESCO and a National Historic Landmark. Visits to Santuario de Chimayó, Santa Clara Pueblo, Poeh Museum will introduce us to chilis, Hispanic weaving and Pueblo Pottery. We will visit the recently opened and proclaimed "The House of Eternal Return." Created by the Meow Wolf art collective. And much more! Cost: \$1499 double/\$2039 single for land program package which includes five nights' accommodation and six days' activities, twelve meals, six lectures, seven field trips, one performance, gratuities, and the Road Scholar Assurance Program. Not included airfare (group arrangements are available) and approximately \$66 airport shuttle fee. Plus \$25 RC10 pre- registration fee for fee paying members, \$50 for non-fee paying members. Additional cancellation insurance available for \$100/\$157 (double/single). Website information: <https://www.roadscholar.org/ia-22047-rc10-santa-fe>. For additional information, contact Karen Maher, kmaher2@nycap.rr.com or 518-477-6746 or 518-588-4083.

NOVEMBER 30 TO DECEMBER 8, 2018, DANUBE WALTZ RIVER CRUISE—HISTORY, MUSIC AND CHRISTMAS MARKETS! Please contact Alice Schielke at aliceschielke@gmail.com or 518-368-9009. She is presently taking names for a waiting list.

NOTE:

When registering for a trip, please remember that a **member of RC 10** is anyone who has retired from a NYSUT local that is located in Albany, Saratoga, Rensselaer, or Washington counties or is a Social Member who has retired from a NYSUT local in some other part of the state and has paid member fees to his/her Council and a social membership fee to RC 10. Anyone who did not retire as an in-service member of a NYSUT local is not eligible for sustaining or social membership and must pay the guest registration fee. A **sustaining member** has paid the annual sustaining membership fee for the fiscal year that is from July 1 to June 30.

GET TRIP INFORMATION AND REGISTRATION FORMS ON THE WEB! Here's how: 1) Log on to <http://rc10.ny.aft.org>. 2) Click on ACTIONS & EVENTS menu, and 3) Click the Travel & Social tab. The generic travel/form (printed below) is a pdf file on this page.

TRAVEL/SOCIAL GENERIC REGISTRATION FORM

(If you are signing up for more than one activity, or will be taking a guest, please copy this form and fill in the appropriate information.)

Name _____ Home Phone _____ Cell Phone* _____
*Take phone to event

Email _____ Registering for: Event & Date _____

Check One: For 2017-2018: () RC10 Member who has paid the annual sustaining membership fee
() Guest or Member who has not paid the annual sustaining membership fee

Event Selections:

For Luncheons/Meals, Entrée of Choice _____ For Trips, Pick Up Location _____

Other notes (Keep it Simple): _____

Total Enclosed \$ _____

-From Your President Continued from Page 1

The State Bar Association has just called for passage of the convention proposition. They claim there is a mass of arcane laws that require sweeping changes. It seems they believe that only those who wrote or litigated these arcane laws can be trusted to fix what they have wrought! I am sure passage of this proposition will be a full employment act for some branches of the legal profession. A massive, technical change in numerous laws all hidden in plain sight is not the way to achieve improvement. A massive change of obscure rules by one take it or leave it vote package will take away your right to choose and more. Remember that the purpose of a vote on an amendment is to offer you choices you can make to change or not. The purpose of limited change is to let you know what you are asked to choose between. The convention takes that away from you and gives you a take it or leave it bundle of good and evil.

The constitution can be amended by your vote on any issue. We have had 200 votes to amend the present document since 1894!

Trust your own judgment on each referendum and don't let them hide bad acts behind good TV ads. Protect your own right to choose, don't surrender it to others. Vote NO on the Convention issue!

~David Golden, President

Travel/Social Call to Action!



If you have read the Travel/Social section of this newsletter, you must be curious about the Travel/Social offerings of RC 10. If so, the Travel/Social Committee needs you! As you know, the retirees who serve the membership are volunteers. We're fortunate to have many diligent individuals who give regularly of their talents and time. In the case of our committee, our offerings range from luncheons to one-day outings and from multiple-day outings to exciting foreign travel experiences. As you can imagine, this variety of activities requires many hands-on deck. As is the normal course of events, people serve the committee as their circumstances allow and phase out as their lives enter the next chapter. At present, we're undergoing a significant loss of volunteers who have served our Committee admirably for many years, to the benefit of our entire membership. While we wish them well as they move on to their 'next chapter', we're in need of more manpower if we're to continue to serve our membership as we have to date. If you've enjoyed our activities, consider joining our Committee to help make them happen. You don't need previous experience—senior members of the Committee will be happy to work alongside you to show you the ropes. Start with a luncheon or an afternoon outing or a day activity. You probably have ideas of your own—if something interests you, it would most likely interest our members. Our meetings are regularly held the third Tuesday of the month. The Committee looks forward to welcoming you! Please RSVP to Karen Maher via email to attend, kmaher2@nycap.rr.com.

PRE-RETIREMENT SEMINAR



Above: Participants at the 2016 Pre-Retirement Seminar

On Saturday, November 4, Retiree Council 10 and Election District 10 will hold a Pre-Retirement Seminar at NYSUT Headquarters for active teachers and SRPs who belong to the Teachers' Retirement System. Those who are considering retiring in the next few years as well as those in Tiers V and VI will receive information about their retirement benefits from each of those tiers.

Presenters for the day will be Cori Bichteman, representing the New York State Teachers' Retirement System; Adam Pellitier from the Social Security Administration; Angela Roy from NYSUT Member Benefits; and Steve Kramer from Feldman, Kramer & Monaco, P.C., who will present legal considerations before and after retirement.

Joy Bears will be available to those attending who have colleagues and friends undergoing cancer treatment.

If you know of a NYSUT member who would be interested in this seminar, please have him/her contact rc10secretary@hotmail.com.

SHARE SOME JOY!



RC 10 will hold another Joy Bear Workshop on Wednesday, October 25 from 10 am to 12 noon at NYSUT on Route 7 in Latham. Joy Bears are decorated teddy bears that are given to cancer patients to provide comfort as they undergo chemo treatment. It is the hope of the project to get dozens of bears decorated and delivered to cancer patients. This project only asks you for your time. All materials are provided free of cost. You do not need to be a long time craft person to make a Joy Bear. If you have craft supplies (thread, lace, ribbon) that you would like to donate, please bring them with you. Bring a friend or two to help us complete these much appreciated bears. To sign up, please contact Ann Cherney at acherne1@nycap.rr.com or call 982-1923 after 3 p.m. Please help!

If you know of a person undergoing treatment for cancer, please contact rc10secretary@hotmail.com and a bear will be sent to that person.

RC 10 MEMBERS STAND UP TO SAY ALL CHILDREN DESERVE A QUALIFIED TEACHER!

On Tuesday, September 12, 2017, 60 education activists united in Saratoga to tell the SUNY Board of Trustees that all students deserve highly qualified teachers. The protest came about as a result of a proposal to alter teacher certification requirements for charter schools, requiring only 30 hours of hands-on classroom experience, and another 100 hours of observations. Charter schools would be able to design their own training plans for certifying their teachers, a problem considering that profit potential might incentivize shoddy requirements, and that charter schools are well known for their lack of transparency and lack of cooperation with state authorities.

The change in certification requirements would, in essence, create a two-tier system that would say that one child is entitled to a highly certified teacher, and another child is not. Given that charter schools set up in areas with high poverty rates and families of color, those communities would be impacted the most. Assemblywoman Carrie Woerner (D-Round Lake) stated that the harm to struggling communities would not be acceptable. *Brown v. the Board of Education* demanded that every student receive an equal education. The change being proposed would reverse *Brown* by allowing the separate and unequal quality of teachers. Andy Pallotta, President of NYSUT, asked for "social justice for all students."

Some of the RC 10 members who attended the event included Jane Weihe, Dennis Bouchard, Vince Pelliccia, and Tony McCann. They joined NYSUT officials, active teachers, retirees from other regions, nurses, and members of CSEA, Citizen Action, Working Family Party, Alliance for Quality Education and others.

Billy Easton, Executive Director of the Alliance for Quality Education, spoke to the SUNY Board for the group. Calling the plan "unconscionable," he presented the trustees with a letter signed by 40 community groups including the NY NAACP and other civil rights organizations. To see the RC 10 album of the event, go to <http://rc10.ny.aft.org/rc-10-joins-protest-e-z-teacher-certification-charters>.



From left, Tony McCann, Dennis Bouchard, Jane Weihe, Priscilla Mueller and Vince Pelliccia at the protest.

RC 10 MEMBERS ASKED TO VOTE "NO" ON STATE CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION

In November, voters will be asked to decide if New York will hold a convention to rewrite our state constitution. This would be a multi-million dollar waste of taxpayer money and would give special interest groups and power brokers the opportunity to change the constitution for their own interests. NYSUT President Andy Pallotta has warned that a Constitutional Convention "could spell complete disaster for New York State's public education system."

Opening up the constitution for an overhaul could derail vital rights that we have as New Yorkers, including public service pensions, environmental protections, as well as a free public education for our children. Public schools have continually been under assault by hedge fund investors who are pushing charter schools, voucher schemes, and a fast-track to teacher certification. The last time a Constitutional Convention was held, there was a proposal to repeal the Blaine Amendment that was barely defeated. This valuable provision in our constitution prohibits the use of state tax money to fund religious schools. Without this protection, public schools will be devastated by a further loss of funding. We cannot afford to let this happen. It is critical that we be informed and reach out to educate others on the need to VOTE NO on the referendum that will be on the back page of our ballot on November 7.



There are ways you can help. Take action now at the MAC and contribute to NYSUT's campaign to spread the word about this issue: <https://mac.nysut.org/donate>. RC 10 will be scheduling some phone bank time to reach our fellow members with this important information, and we will need your help in signing up and recruiting others. Contact Laraine Gillette at rc10secretary@hotmail.com for more information. Andy Pallotta has also asked us to sign up for at least two labor walks in cooperation with local AFL-CIO councils. Information on future opportunities will be shared on our website at <http://rc10.ny.aft.org>. Lastly, consider purchasing one or more lawn signs at an affordable cost of only \$2 each. Buy some for your family and friends! To order, see <https://www.nysut.org/resources/special-resources-sites/no-constitutional-convention/order-form>.