

RETIREE



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THE UNITED FEDERATION OF TEACHERS RETIRED TEACHERS CHAPTER NEWSLETTER

Congress watch



Senate Republicans refuse (at this writing) to consider any nominee from President Barack Obama for the vacant Supreme Court seat. This refusal pretty much sums up the disposition in both houses of Congress — certain of our elected representatives are avoiding making a decision on serious, long-term issues as they wait to see who wins the presidential election.

We've watched Congressional obstructionism for the past several years with dismay, and we need action on a number of fronts now. We need to get people into Congress who are willing to work with the President regardless of who he or she is. We have an opportunity to do so this year. Numerous seats are up for grabs — every seat in the House and 34 in the Senate. Republicans hold 24, Democrats 10.

Let's take a look at some of the legislation that's on hold:

SENIORS AND VETERANS EMERGENCY BENEFITS ACT (S.2251)

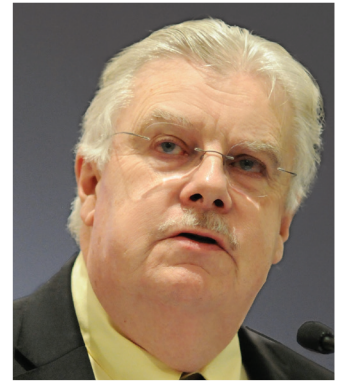
This year there was no COLA for Social Security recipients. Sen. Elizabeth Warren introduced "The Seniors and Veterans Emergency Benefits Act" legislation last November, and it's gone nowhere.

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Message from Tom

BY TOM MURPHY, UFT/RTC CHAPTER LEADER

Any union worth its salt takes care of its members, first and foremost, before it embarks on any other agenda items. Only if a union meets its members' needs, protects their rights and improves their benefits, can the leadership ask them to work on issues of social justice through political action, lobbying and a host of other activities.



HOW WELL DOES THE UFT MEET THOSE NEEDS?

1. We have maintained defined-benefit pensions for our retirees as we've watched them disappear around the nation these past 35 years. And just as we've ensured that every new pension tier is a defined-benefit plan, we've also looked to enhance them when economic and political conditions allow us to.
2. Looking ahead, we're gearing up to oppose a November 2017 referendum on whether the state should have a Constitutional Convention. We don't want to open the door to any possibility of an abridgement of the 1938 provision that says "... membership in any pension or retirement system of the state or of a civil division thereof shall be a contractual relationship, the benefits of which shall not be diminished or impaired."
3. We protect your health coverage. Every time we negotiate with the city, management tries to curtail health benefits. We've successfully blocked these moves over the years and even improved your health benefits along the way.
4. The American Federation of Teachers and the UFT prevented an inordinate increase in Medicare Part B. Some of our members might have seen a nearly 50 percent increase in Medicare Part B monthly premiums! But thousands of our members contacted Congress, and we prevailed. Washington passed legislation in December to reduce the impending increase.
5. Through a similar effort, we worked to delay the tax on so-called Cadillac health insurance plans, high-cost employer-sponsored plans. Scheduled to go into effect in 2018, Congress agreed to delay implementation until 2020. We anticipate that a decade after implementation, our health plans may exceed the threshold, and some part of our plan will become taxed. But, through pre-emptive action, we've pushed this back.

DID YOU KNOW?

All of you know about your pensions and your overall health benefits. But, over the years, I've found that many of you don't know all the good things we provide. Make sure you're taking advantage of everything we offer. It could mean hundreds of dollars in your pocket!

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- Retirees who pay for the City Optional Rider Reimbursement Benefit receive an annual check each spring of up to \$780 based on a payable rate of up to \$65 per eligible month. This reimbursement check is provided by the UFT Welfare Fund.
- If you're enrolled in our Supplemental Health Insurance Plan (SHIP), you can claim up to \$300 per year for out-of-pocket dental expenses. This benefit covers both you and your spouse or domestic partner.
- We offer up to \$2,000 every three years for hearing aids through a combined Welfare Fund and SHIP benefit (\$1,000 from each plan).
- NYSUT will provide no-cost assistance in writing a simple will for you every year as well as helping you arrange power-of-attorney and a health care proxy. This can save you hundreds of dollars in legal fees.

I hope you take advantage of these and all of your benefits, because as a UFT retiree, you deserve peace of mind and economic security. Because you're secure, you and all UFT members have made securing a safety net for all American workers a priority.

Sincerely,
Tom Murphy
UFT Retired Teachers Chapter Leader

CONGRESS *continued from page 1*

Perhaps it will with a friendlier Congress. It would provide retirees, people with disabilities, veterans and other Social Security recipients with a one-time payment of \$581 — 3.9% of the average Social Security retirement benefit.

Among elderly Social Security beneficiaries, 22% of married couples and about 47% of unmarried persons rely on Social Security for 90% or more of their income. For those retirees relying on modest Social Security income to survive, this increase would really help.

S. 2251 will fund this benefit by closing a tax loophole called the CEO performance pay tax break. It will appropriately tax bonus income to provide a needed cost-of-living increase for the elderly. By the way, in case you didn't know, the average CEO of a major corporation earns nearly 300 times more than the average worker.

ALIGNING SOCIAL SECURITY COLAS WITH A NEW INDEX (H.R. 3351)

The Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) for Social Security benefits is calculated using the CPI, or Consumer Price Index. This index measures the change in the cost of consumer goods for the average American.

The Bureau of Labor Statistics also calculates an "experimental" CPI for the elderly referred to as CPI-e. Since the 1980s, the CPI-e has risen more quickly than the CPI, due to the fact that the elderly spend more on medical care, and medical care costs have risen significantly more than the costs for other goods and services. Older people also spend relatively more on housing.

H.R. 3351, introduced by Rep. Mike Honda of California, proposes using the CPI-e rather than the CPI to

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Medicare Part B Reimbursements/IRMAA

The UFT, in conjunction with the NYC Office of Labor Relations, has improved delivery of your Medicare Part B reimbursements.

For those who have EFT direct deposit for pension payments, the city will deposit the money into your pension accounts in June 2016. If you do not have EFT direct deposit, you or your dependent will receive a 2015 Medicare Part B reimbursement check via regular mail in June 2016. Please note: If you cover a spouse or domestic partner, you will receive one check for both reimbursements.

If you paid the Income-Related Monthly Adjustment Amount for Medicare Part B in 2014, the city will make additional reimbursement. If you submitted the required documentation for 2014 Medicare Part B IRMAA reimbursement, the city will either make a direct deposit in June 2016 or send you a check via the United States Postal Service.

UFT Election ballots will be mailed May 5 to be returned by May 25.

We are one of the few unions that allows retirees to vote in a union election.

Maintain UFT retiree participation by voting for the candidates of your choice.

NEW INDUCTEES ON WALL OF HONOR

The UFT added two names to the Wall of Honor in the lobby of UFT headquarters on March 14 in honor of former officers, Harriet Merchant and Aminda Gentile. UFT President Michael Mulgrew praised both “for their dedication” before their colleagues, friends and family members who packed the lobby.

Merchant, who died in March 2015, was a founder of the UFT and served as its treasurer from 1993 to 1997. Gentile was the vice president for education and longtime director of the UFT Teacher Center before her retirement in 2011.



Friends and colleagues of the late Harriet Merchant, inset, pose with UFT President Michael Mulgrew.



Aminda Gentile attended the Wall of Honor ceremony. Behind her is Carmen Alvarez, vice president for special education.



A section of the Wall of Honor.

UFT retirees from the East Coast to the West have come out to rally and work for Hillary Clinton's presidential campaign.



▲ AFT President Randi Weingarten, seated, with UFT retirees Richard and Janet Miller at a rally for Hillary Clinton in Las Vegas.

▲ Retirees Tony Ciatto, Sherry Friedman, Michael Eiron, Sherry Handelsman and Eric Metzger volunteered to work for Hillary Clinton at the UFT Boca Raton office. Florida Coordinator of Sections and Services Ken Goodfriend is third from the right.

calculate the COLA for Social Security beneficiaries. Like Sen. Warren's bill, H.R. 3351 hasn't moved — but we're hopeful that it will with a friendlier Congress.

PRIVATIZATION OF MEDICARE

House Speaker Paul Ryan proposed in 2014 to change our single-payer Medicare system into a voucher system. He wanted Medicare recipients to buy private insurance. The proposal was abandoned in late 2015 after President Obama threatened to veto the entire budget.

However, this dangerous idea to change Medicare hasn't been buried for good. We're hoping it won't move next year, and be assured, we will be monitoring this.

COME AND ENJOY!

The RTC 53rd Annual Luncheon

MONDAY, JUNE 13, 2016

New York Hilton Midtown
1335 Avenue of the Americas, NYC

Registration is now open.

NYS Veterans Equity Bill

The UFT Veterans Committee, chaired by retiree John Garvey, is keeping us up-to-date on the status of a bill that could benefit all veterans enrolled in state retirement plans.

The Veterans Equity Bill (A-04313/S-04124) would allow veterans who are enrolled in retirement plans to buy back active military duty time — up to three years — thus increasing the number of years of employment service.

Sponsored by Assemblywoman Amy Paulin and Sen. William J. Larkin, Jr., this bill now has the fiscal, budgetary support of Gov. Andrew Cuomo.

Contact your Assembly member or state Senator and let them know you support this bill, and write to Gov. Cuomo and thank him for his support. See the following websites for email or USPS addresses:

- www.assembly.state.ny.us
- www.nysenate.gov and
- www.governor.ny.gov.



John Garvey



UFT RETIREE

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