

RETIREE



VOL. 28, NO.2
FEBRUARY/MARCH 2016

THE UNITED FEDERATION OF TEACHERS RETIRED TEACHERS CHAPTER NEWSLETTER

Congress watch



SOME ITEMS REGARDING MEDICARE:

Drug Prices:

(source, Medicare Rights Center)

"In December, 2015 Congresswoman Jan Schakowsky introduced the Medicare Fair Drug Pricing Act (H.R. 4207) ...

Rep. Schakowsky said, 'Over the past few years, many breakthrough drugs have come to market, providing hope to many Americans living with diseases that currently have little or no treatment or cure. Yet, little has been done to ensure that patients can actually afford those life-saving treatments ... The Medicare Fair Drug Pricing Act ... would ensure that Medicare beneficiaries have access to breakthrough, life-saving drugs. Under my legislation the Secretary of Health and Human Services would negotiate directly with drug manufacturers of sole source drugs and biologics covered under Medicare Part D to ensure that these medicines are affordable and accessible for beneficiaries.' "

Interestingly, polls show that public support is growing for a solution.

- 74% believe prescription drug prices are unreasonable.
- 83% support allowing Medicare to negotiate prices.

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Message from Tom

BY TOM MURPHY, UFT/RTC CHAPTER LEADER

This month, we have a couple of "connect-the-dots" scenarios to discuss, so without further ado, let's begin.

Let's connect the dots to see what is really going on with the flat Social Security cost-of-living adjustment (COLA), Medicare Part B and the proposed Consumer Price Index for the elderly, or CPI-e.

1. Inflation was flat this year, so, for the second time in a decade, we saw no increase in our Social Security checks.
2. Many Medicare participants were scheduled to see their monthly deductions from Social Security jump from \$104 to \$159.
3. The bipartisan December budget compromise took care of this, reducing the premium increase for those not covered by Social Security's "hold harmless" clause.
4. This Congressional action was forged, in good part, in response to political pressure from retirees, many of them our own, who consistently work each year to protect senior citizens.

In the past, our collective political activity helped prevent the privatization of Social Security, (and our timing couldn't have been better because that was right before the economy tanked in 2008.) Through our continued work, we have forestalled the right wing's plans to create vouchers for Medicare or provide block grants to states, which might manipulate payments.

Now, we'd like to see us move away from pegging COLAs to the Consumer Price Index. We'd like to see COLAs aligned with the proposed Consumer Price Index for the Elderly (CPI-e.)

The CPI-e would give a more realistic approximation of inflation as it affects retirees because it factors in those costs that more directly affect retirees including medical and drug expenses. Our hope is that a labor-friendly Congress might present this in the near future to a labor-friendly President.

Now let's connect the dots between pensions, the Friedrichs case and a NYS Constitutional Convention, again, not in a powerless moan of exasperation and defeat but with a full sense of the possibilities that was our signature during our in-service years and now is our destiny as Michael Mulgrew's "daytime union," as he calls us.

Build the argument along with me:

1. The billionaires have been behind the assaults on public employee pensions in Wisconsin, Ohio, Chicago, Detroit and elsewhere.
2. NYS has a constitutional provision dating to 1938 that says, "No public employee pension shall be diminished or impaired."



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- 86% support requiring transparency on pricing.

We think this is worth a letter to your Congressman or woman. Pick up your pen, sharpen your pencil or get on the computer, but please write.

To find your Congress person or Senator, go to the UFT website, click “GET INVOLVED” tab along the top of the screen, then click “About UFT Political Action” to the left of that screen click the “Contact Your Representatives” box to find the appropriate link: “To find your federal and state elected officials, click here: <http://hq-salsa.wiredforchange.com/o/5950/getLocal.jsp>”



Do you know your Medicare?

Some people may not be aware of all the services, including some preventive care, for which Medicare provides coverage. Medicare also provides hospice care and home health care if the recipient meets certain requirements.

Learn about what Medicare covers by calling Social Security at (800) 772-1213, from 7 am to 7pm, Monday through Friday or Medicare at (800) 633-4227 and by reading about Medicare at www.medicarerights.org or calling the Medicare Rights National Helpline at (800) 333-4114.

JUST A REMINDER:

Medicare Part B completely covers flu shots once a year with no Part B deductible. This is true for both Original Medicare and Medicare Advantage plans. Original Medicare will pay for the flu shot no matter where you get it, as long as the health care provider is enrolled in Medicare.

We write letters, don't we?

How often do you become indignant after reading or hearing a news story? Have you ever written a letter to your local newspaper, or even to our union newspaper, the *New York Teacher*?

The trick to getting published is to focus on one point, to make it succinctly and articulately, and to get that letter into the mail or e-mail immediately.

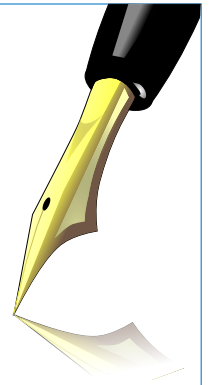
One of our UFT retirees, Robert Berger, gets published frequently in *The Daily News* and other city papers. This particular letter was printed in *The Chief* on Dec. 18, 2015.

“To the editor:

Observations are principals’ stock-in-trade, but the president of the Council of School Supervisors and Administrators, Ernest Logan, made an especially astute one when he said that some of his members would not pay union dues voluntarily, because it’s human nature to want something for nothing (“Fair-Share Dues Fight: City Unions Coalesce to Sway High Court,” Nov. 27 issue).

That is actually what is motivating the Center for Individual Rights to propel the Friedrichs case into the Supreme Court — by crushing the ability of public-sector unions to effectively represent their members, they think that they can impoverish the middle class and line their own pockets.

However, it is human nature to fight back against oppression. This is America at its best — whether it was the crown, the slaveocracy, the Axis powers or Jim Crow that had to be stopped. Today, we draw strength from the sacrifices of the generations that came before us. In the battle to protect unions, defeat is not an option.”



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3. In November 2017, NYS will ask us to decide whether we should hold a Constitutional Convention — the state must ask the electorate to vote on this every 20 years. (You know that we’ll swing into action to fight this, but I’ll get there after point 5, below.)
4. Even with the death of Justice Antonin Scalia, the outcome of *Friedrichs v California Teachers Association* remains an unknown until the Supreme Court issues a ruling later this spring. The Court heard oral arguments on Jan. 11 as UFT President Michael Mulgrew, AFT President Randi Weingarten and many of our fellow UFT officers and retirees stood on the Court’s steps to show their support for unions. (For more on *Friedrichs*, see the Delegate Assembly report in the March *New York Teacher* and visit the UFT’s website to learn about our new campaign, “Union: Loud and Proud.”)
5. If the Court rules in favor of Rebecca Friedrichs and her co-plaintiffs, no one knows how this will play out in crippling a union’s ability to fund its normal, day-to-day operations.
6. Now, close the loop: Without those resources, how would we fight a Constitutional Convention that could threaten our constitutionally-protected pensions? Where would we get the resources to inform the public? How will we defend our hard-earned pensions when the billionaires point their fingers at us and blame us for all of society’s woes? Can we counter their piles of money as they lobby to diminish our benefits?

We, as UFT retirees, must consider all these variables, carefully watch and then valiantly fight, if need be, to protect what we earned when we worked. Campaign 2016 beckons and we cannot be idle.

RETIRES UP AND DOWN THE COAST



▲ UFT retirees Arlene Froyen and Harold Matthes attended the Jan. 17 Democratic debate in Charleston, SC.

AFT President Randi Weingarten and UFT retirees campaigning for Hillary Clinton in New Hampshire before the primary on Feb. 9. ▶



▲ Retired teachers Jeanne Casanovas and Sharon McCourt were among the UFT and AFT members, staffers and officers who rallied at the Supreme Court on Jan. 11 as the Justices inside heard oral arguments for Friedrichs vs California Teachers Association.



▲ The bus ride to Washington, DC, for the Friedrichs rally.



▲ Chapter Leader Tom Murphy, right, with Ellen and Jerry Wolfe at the Ocala (Fla.) meeting on Jan. 8 at the Holiday Inn.



Past and present: Current Tottenville High School Chapter Leader Jessica Peterson, left, with former Chapter Leader Tom Murphy and a former THS student, Debra Penny. Penny is now the UFT Staten Island borough representative. Murphy, of course, is the Retired Teachers Chapter leader. **Right:** Sandra March.



UFT D.A. ENDORSES DEBRA PENNY FOR TRS

As you probably know, our intrepid Sandra March will not seek re-election to the Teachers' Retirement Board after more than 30 years of service. The Delegate Assembly passed a resolution on Feb. 3 to endorse Debra Penny, the UFT Staten Island Borough Representative, in the upcoming election this spring.

Ms. Penny has been a unionist for years, serving as a chapter leader, a pension specialist and educational liaison. She serves on the UFT Executive Board, is a delegate to the AFT and sits on the NYSUT Board of Directors. She has more than 34 years of experience in the classroom, including work with children with special needs.

SAVE THE DATE!

FRIDAY, MAY 6, 2016
10 a.m. – 3 p.m.

UFT Headquarters
52 Broadway, 2nd floor
New York, NY 10004

Are you a UFT retiree
who has written a book?

Would you like to
participate in our
“Meet the UFT
Retiree Authors”
open house?

Please send the requested
information by March 30 to:

UFT Retiree Programs
52 Broadway, 17th Floor
New York, NY 10004
Attn: Book Fair

“Meet the UFT Retiree Authors” Open House

Name

Address

Telephone # Email

Name of book

Book description (2-3 sentences)

Genre

Do you have books to sell? Yes ☐ No ☐ Price: \$

Please include a brief bio (max 150 words)



UFT RETIREE

Michael Mulgrew,
UFT President
Tom Murphy,
Chapter Leader

Sandra March, *UFT Liaison to RTC*
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