

Retiree Organizer

A NEWSLETTER FOR NYSUT'S RETIREE LEADERS

State constitutional convention referendum just three months away: **Vote NO on Nov. 7**

NYSUT retiree council leaders say the “No ConCon” postcard campaign is an effective way to reach NYSUT retirees likely to vote “NO” on the Nov. 7 New York State Constitutional Convention referendum. The hand-written postcard campaign continues to find wide support and success among council leaders. Council presidents: Your NYSUT Retiree Services consultant can provide you with postcards so your council can participate.

What more can you do?

- Write a letter to the editor of your local newspaper. Use the letter from the NYSUT website www.nysut.org/concon (requires login) or the sample letter template from the New York State Alliance for Retired Americans at right. Many

newspapers accept letters to the editor via email. Keep it brief, fewer than 150 words is ideal.



RC 7 members working in NYSUT's Syracuse Regional Office on their 'No ConCon' postcard writing campaign: (clockwise from bottom left) Ed O'Rourke, Marjory Schuster, Doug Matousek, Bill Spreter, Cara Kirkby, Cheryl McCullough and Mary Kay Boyle.

Letter to the editor template

(provided by NYSARA)

Newspaper address

To the editor:

Complex challenges rarely have simple solutions, and for this reason, a “no” vote on a constitutional convention is the only sensible choice for New Yorkers this November. We all want better government, but creating an open-ended process controlled by

professional politicians, at a cost of potentially hundreds of millions of taxpayer dollars, isn't the best way to achieve it.

Seniors especially should understand that the state constitution contains important protections, such as provisions against age discrimination, the right to an absentee ballot, assurance of access to nursing care and labor standards.

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Organizer**

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chapters and retiree councils may
reprint all *Organizer* content.

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Constitutional convention referendum

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**(Alternative paragraphs,
which replace the second
paragraph above, if needed.)**

Option 1: Seniors should understand that the state constitution provides protection against age discrimination. This is especially important on the job and in seeking employment as about one-third of 65- to 75-year-olds in New York still make up a significant portion of the workforce.

Option 2: Seniors should understand that the state constitution provides important labor protections, setting the standards for the minimum wage, workday hours and fairness in how overtime is paid.

Option 3: Seniors, who use the absentee ballot more than any other group, should

understand that the state constitution provides important protections to ensure their voting rights.

Option 4: Retirees who depend on their pensions can lose them. This will result in a dramatic blow to the New York State economy since those pensions create 216,000 jobs, contribute \$35 billion to the economy and result in \$4.13 billion in New York State taxes.

The state constitution can be modified in better ways rather than opening it up to wholesale changes that put rights and protections at risk.

Sincerely,
Your name,
Your town

NYSUT's efforts lead to legislative victories for retirees

NYSUT's legislative lobbying efforts continue to make progress protecting retiree health benefits.

NYSHIP Retiree Health Insurance Benefits. The enacted budget rejected the proposal to eliminate the reimbursement of Medicare Part B premium rates for NYSHIP retirees, as was the Income Related Monthly Adjustment Amounts (IRMAA). The budget also preserves NYSHIP retirees' individual (and their dependents) share of their health insurance cost, based upon their years of service and grade-level as a state employee.

Retiree Health Benefit Trust Fund. The enacted budget creates a health benefit trust fund, placed under the custody of the commissioner of the department of civil service and the state comptroller, to fund the costs associated with providing retiree health benefits for retired state employees and their dependents.

Long Island retirees make 'No ConCon' calls a weekly morning routine, and so can you

The NYSUT Nassau Regional Office is bustling with NYSUT retiree enthusiasm on Thursday mornings, as members make phone calls to alert fellow retirees about the upcoming constitutional convention referendum vote. Recently, 19 retirees staffed the phone banks and two of them



NYSUT VP Paul Pecorale

took home Dunkin' Donuts gift cards offered in a drawing. Retirees will continue to make calls through the Nov. 7 Election Day. NYSUT Suffolk County retirees are making



Jay Broad, a Lynbrook TA retiree, has worked every Thursday morning phone bank at the NYSUT Nassau Regional Office.

similar morning calls using the NYSUT Suffolk Regional Office on Tuesdays through Nov. 7.

"Our retirees are indefatigable and are a vital part of the initiatives that impact retirees, in-service members, and the students and parents," said NYSUT



LI retirees make calls (from left) Marcia Curcio, Hewlett Woodmere TA; Susan Melnick, Merrick TA; Joan Mantle, N. Merrick TA; and Ann Weiss, Merrick TA, at NYSUT's Nassau Regional Office.

Second Vice President Paul Pecorale. "I want to encourage all NYSUT retiree council leaders and members to get involved in this effort to stop the constitutional convention. Our Long Island retirees show that even devoting one morning a week to making phone calls and getting the message out can make a big difference in this fight."

Considering calling your retiree council members? Contact the NYSUT Regional Political Organizer in your region for guidance and best practices. (See box below for contacts.)

Tip: When you call members, consider asking them if they have a ride to the polls on Nov. 7. If they answer "yes," ask if they would consider driving a fellow NYSUT retiree to the polls. Save this information for use in getting out the vote in 2018, too.

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Regional Political Organizer Directory

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Long Island retirees make 'No ConCon' calls ... continued from page 3

- **Expand your retiree-to-retiree postcard campaign** by asking your NYSUT retiree services consultant for more postcards.
- **Continue to convince every member of your household to Vote "No" on the ConCon** on Nov. 7.
- **Share the constitutional convention resources** with your members, including the following:



NYSUT's Suffolk Regional Office hosts the region's retiree members as they make No ConCon calls to fellow NYSUT Suffolk County retiree members.

Constitutional Convention Resources

Links:

Smithtown Teachers Association video

Extended version: www.youtube.com/watch?v=dVxwH-XT4To <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dVxwH-XT4To&feature=youtu.be>>&feature=youtu.be

Niagara Wheatfield video

www.youtube.com/watch?v=MOTijNuDZVE&feature=youtu.be

The New York State Constitutional Convention Clearinghouse

www.newyorkconcon.info/

Articles from NYSUT United

www.nysut.org/news/nysut-united/issues/2017/january-2017/trs-constitutional-convention-endangers-your-pension

www.nysut.org/news/nysut-united/issues/2017/january-2017/open-the-state-constitution-heck-no

Link to NYSUT Toolkit

www.nysut.org/my-nysut/reference/toolkit/leader/constitutional-convention/facts

www.nysut.org/my-nysut/reference/toolkit/leader/constitutional-convention/point-counterpoint

www.nysut.org/my-nysut/reference/toolkit/leader/constitutional-convention/sample-letter

www.nysut.org/~media/files/nysut/mynysut/leader/toolkits/constitutional-convention/pandorasboxsept2015.pdf?la=en

www.nysut.org/my-nysut/reference/toolkit/leader/constitutional-convention/about



Vote No! Vote No! Vote No! Vote No! Vote No! Vote No! Vote No!
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How could a New York State Constitutional Convention affect you and your family?

Nov. 7, 2017, Constitutional Convention Ballot Question:
"Shall there be a convention to revise the constitution and amend same?"

A "yes" vote for holding the constitutional convention means you could LOSE:

- Your pension.
- Your job.
- Retirement securities.
- State debt limits.
- Social welfare needs.
- Workers' compensation.
- Your visits to state parks.
- Your right to bargain collectively.
- Your right to have a union.
- Your right to a free public education.
- State budget spending caps.
- Environmental protections.
- Public schools, libraries, colleges and universities.

Even if you oppose one or two of the above, is it worth risking all the other rights? Think about it...

How different would your life be if there were no:

- Pension for you to retire with?
- Public schools, libraries, colleges and universities for you to work at or for your children or grandchildren to attend?
- Right to have a contract and have it enforced by a union?
- Protections if you are injured or lose your job?
- Adirondacks or Catskills in which to hunt, fish or hike?
- Protections against polluting our drinking water?
- Spending limits for the government?

How different would your life be if:

- New York State imposed the state income tax on your pension?

What can you do to make sure the constitutional convention is voted down?

- Talk to friends, family, neighbors, your community and other NYSUT retirees about why it should be voted down and why they should spread the word!
- On Nov. 7 vote "NO" on the New York State Constitutional Convention.



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2017–18 New York State legislative budget update

Working closely with our key legislative coalition partner, the New York Statewide Senior Action Council, NYSUT retirees were able to achieve many budget and legislative improvements:

Retiree issues

- We won continuation of the Managed Care Consumer Assistance Program with a budget increase of funding for the Patient's Rights Helpline number, 800-333-4374.
- We won continuation of the Community Services for the Elderly Program with a budget increase of \$875,000, and improved state regulations allowing more flexibility for local directors of the program to direct funding to priorities within their communities.
- We were successful in getting the Legislature and governor to increase funding by an additional \$500,000 to improve the state's efforts to prevent elder abuse.
- We were successful in our efforts to increase funding to \$1.3 million for the Naturally Occurring Retirement Community and Neighborhood Program. NORC provides support services for retirees and older people living in residential housing, by offering a wide range of support services geared to help them remain in their homes and avoid unnecessary hospital and nursing-home stays.
- We achieved victory against the governor's plan to significantly cut funding from the state's senior centers.

- We achieved our goal of changing the state's funding method for the New York Connects program to protect it against potential federal cuts to Medicaid. New York Connects provides New Yorkers — regardless of age — with a free, objective, comprehensive, local directory of long-term care programs, services and providers.

- We were successful in maintaining the same funding level for the Senior Transportation Program and in getting the Legislature to reject the governor's proposal to eliminate the program's separate budget line and lumping its funding with other state transportation programs.

Future state legislative issues NYSUT retirees must continue to advocate for:

- Improving safe health care staffing to ensure that our health care professionals working in hospitals, nursing homes and health facilities are staffed for optimal care to reduce the risk of accidents, infections and death.
- Addressing the Home Care Worker shortage to stress the growing need to improve state incentives to recruit and retain home care providers, and ending the waiting lists for these essential services.

NYSUT retirees must continue to fight against the Trump 2017–18 federal budget and for full federal support to Medicaid:

According to the Urban Institute, the cuts made by U.S. House of Representatives in the bill it approved to replace the Affordable Care Act — also known as Obamacare — would mean, if the bill becomes law, New York State would have to raise taxes or cut other parts of its budget — such as public education — by \$50 billion over 10 years to maintain the Medicaid program structure within Obamacare.

Elimination and drastic cuts to federal programs serving and impacting NYSUT retirees, including:

- Heating and cooling assistance (HELP)
- Community Development Block Grants
- Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP). This popular national volunteer program was started in Staten Island.
- Senior Employment Program
- Foster Grandparent Program
- Additional reductions to food stamps, Meals on Wheels and housing for low-income seniors

NYSUT retirees must contact their House member at 866-327-8670 to demand they vote against the Trump budget and for maintenance of these important federal services. Contact Sens. Charles Schumer and Kirsten Gillibrand to thank them for fighting to protect these programs. New York's two U.S. Senators do not hear enough messages letting them know we appreciate their efforts to protect our members.