

By the time you read this, the border wall and immigration security impasse will be resolved. Will the ill will and raw emotions engendered by that impasse prove a hindrance to compromise legislation with the “deal-making” president? Will his personality further obstruct legislative progress? For the nation’s sake, we hope not.

ISSUE	LEGISLATION AND PROGNOSTICATION
INFRASTRUCTURE FUNDING	“We will pursue our mission ... to increase paychecks by rebuilding America with green and modern infrastructure from sea to shining sea,” Speaker Nancy Pelosi said Jan. 3. Oregon Democrat Transportation Panel Chair Rep. Peter DeFazio, projected a national pilot for a vehicle-miles-traveled fee, greater care of public transit projects to improve commutes, funding for freight corridors to reduce congestion and resiliency provisions for building projects capable of withstanding severe weather assaults. DeFazio also said he would reject funding proposals anchored on private sector backing. Republican leadership in the Senate, meanwhile, has signaled a willingness to collaborate with Pelosi, DeFazio and Democratic colleagues on a long-term infrastructure funding proposal. Chances positive.
PRESCRIPTION DRUG PRICING	This is another area where Trump and Democrats have said they agree: lowering skyrocketing drug prices. Especially for seniors, it’s a very politically popular thing to do. How? It could come in the form of changes to Medicare or certain drug rebate laws. But the big Pharma lobby is powerful, and it has so far convinced Trump to take a softer approach. Chances? Positive for minor reforms.
STABILIZING THE AFFORDABLE CARE ACT	Democrats are looking at passing a bill to stabilize the law. They want to fight back against the lawsuits to have the ACA declared unconstitutional. Remember, the ACA was Nancy Pelosi’s signature piece of legislation passed in 2010, so keeping the health care law alive is very important to her. Given his expressed antipathy for an Obama and Pelosi signature success, expect Trump to oppose very hard on this front. Trump has shown little interest in the details of health care. Chances are very slightly positive.
GUN LAW REFORM	Pelosi has committed to bringing gun legislation to the floor including a universal background check bill. The plan is to have the universal background check bill be bipartisan. Will Senate Republican Majority Leader Mitch McConnell even allow it to come to the Senate floor for a vote. The pundits say no. So, chances are negative for such legislation with a Republican Senate.
ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES	Obviously, any legislation that the Democrat House might produce would die for lack of advancement in the Senate, which would only uphold the president’s policies and deregulations. However, Democrats on the House Energy and Commerce Committee will likely conduct oversight of the Trump administration’s rollback of environmental regulations, providing public exposure of some of the more extreme threats to health and well-being. Some Democrats want to establish a select committee to push climate change legislation. Again, the Senate will likely ignore. Chances, a big zero.

Retirees: Did you know that there are **over 50 vendors** offering discounts to UFT members. You can find them on the **UFT mobile app** under Member Discounts or call UFT Member Services at **(212) 598-9512** for a list of participating vendors.



UFT RETIREE

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RETIREE

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THE UNITED FEDERATION OF TEACHERS RETIRED TEACHERS CHAPTER NEWSLETTER

Congress watch



At this writing, (mid-January, there is a significant lead time to getting ourselves published and mailed), the Democrat-majority House and the president have been at loggerheads, and the Republican-majority Senate quiet and mostly uninvolved, on the subject of a border wall and immigration. On other major issues, the hope exists that the self-identified “dealmaking” president and a Democrat-majority House looking for legislative progress might arrive at compromise legislation on which he would then cajole the Senate to approve. Obviously, it all awaits the solution to the current political impasse.

So, what can we ascertain to be the legislative issues on which the Democrat-majority House hopes to gain some traction? The chart on page 4 outlines the more important of them and provides predictions as to how they might turn out over the next two years.

Ironically, the very first piece of legislation that House Democrats introduced in the new Congress, was H.R. 1, an election reform and campaign financing bill, loaded with sweeping anti-corruption measures:

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Message from Tom

BY TOM MURPHY, UFT/RTC CHAPTER LEADER



New blood is important to any organization or institution so that it continues to maintain its mission and to prepare for a dynamic future. With that in mind, the UFT Retired Teachers Chapter Executive Committee, at my request, recently considered and supported a policy that authorized the creation of a Leadership Council for that purpose.

This is some of the discussion that helped chart this new direction.

The UFT Retired Teachers Chapter should continually grow and change in order to effectively serve the interests of the Chapter and the UFT rank-and-file retiree membership. This should be done in the context of maintaining successful existing practices and benefits.

It is the mandate of the RTC to help preserve and when possible to enhance the economic, professional, organizational and political well-being of retirees consistent with the goals and policies of the United Federation of Teachers, our state and national affiliates and those of organized labor.

Since much of the current RTC leadership was reelected in 2018 to a fourth term of office approaching 10 years of service, a need for self-renewal is appropriate to further promote member engagement and effective service to retirees. This must be an ongoing top priority of chapter leadership.

To promote these ideas, the Executive Board has created a small, fluid Leadership Council composed of mostly newer retirees who have not served in major union roles outside their schools or work units but have exhibited the skills and talents that can potentially serve the present and future needs of the chapter and its members.

The RTC Leader, with the advice and consent of the Executive Board has chosen a diverse group of newer retirees to kick off this new project. As we go forward, we are looking to represent elementary, intermediate, high school divisions, functional chapters and the Federation of Nurses/ UFT. The experiences each brings to the table will enrich the outcome.

The first members are Chaitram Aklu, Steven Chazanow, Deborah Coquais, Doreen Crinnigan, Diane Grant, Cora Shillingford, Joe Sicilian, Nina Tribble and Tom Whitman.

I have asked John Soldini and Vince Gaglione to serve as Co-Coordina-tors of this group given their long service as in-service and retiree leaders. Their expertise will help guide the energies and progress of these enthusiastic participants.

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It is envisioned that unscripted outreach experiments be considered which will be grounded in the well-developed policies and practices of the RTC, honoring past leadership upon whose shoulders we stand.

The Janus Supreme Court decision combined with other anti-labor assaults on working men and women have taught us the importance of active inclusion of rank-and-file union members in the life of their union. The groundwork done by the UFT in coordination with its NYSUT and AFT affiliates has demonstrated that strong rank-and-file participation in union activities is the best defense against such attacks. That we were proactive in advance of these onslaughts prepared us to win and not lose the battles confronting us. That is why engaging the fresh energies of these newer retirees is so important.

Each Leadership Council member will be encouraged to develop a project of personal interest which they and the coordinators believe will enhance the interests of rank and file retiree members, preparing the Chapter for its future stages of development.

We have had two meetings so far and UFT President Michael Mulgrew, Staff Director LeRoy Barr, officers such as Treasurer Debbie Penny, Vice President Anne Goldman, the TRS Trustees and Ann Rosen have already spent time with the participants to encourage them. We expect that projects related to member engagement, tapping into the interests of rank and file retirees, union organizing, various forms of volunteering, COPE, political action, member benefits, social and cultural matters and more will be high on their agenda.

Let's wish them well in their endeavors.



Staff Director LeRoy Barr with the Leadership Council. From left, standing, Chaitram Aklu, Vince Gaglione, Joe Sicilian, John Soldini, LeRoy Barr and Tom Murphy. Seated, from left, Steven Chazanow, Cora Shillingford, Nina Tribble, Diane Grant, Doreen Crinnigan and Deborah Coquais. Photo by Chaitram Aklu.



UFT President Michael Mulgrew and Chapter Leader Tom Murphy (standing) with some members of the council. From left, Tom Whitman, Nina Tribble, Chaitram Aklu, Doreen Crinnigan and Deborah Coquais. Photo by Chaitram Aklu.

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- Public financing of campaigns, powered by small donations;
- Support for a constitutional amendment to end Citizens United.
- Passing the DISCLOSE Act, which would require Super PACs and “dark money” political organizations to make their donors public.
- Requiring the president and vice president to disclose 10 years of tax returns.
- Stopping members of Congress from using taxpayer money to settle sexual harassment or discrimination cases.

- Creating new national automatic voter registration.
- Ending partisan gerrymandering in federal elections and prohibiting voter roll purging, among a host of other measures.

The bill has no chance of passing the Republican-controlled Senate or being signed by President Donald Trump. Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell already bluntly stated, “That’s not going to go anywhere.” But by making anti-corruption their No. 1 priority, House Democrats are throwing down the gauntlet for Republicans.

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“The Chums of Carol Keefe” Lunch

Many retirees keep in touch with their colleagues in a variety of ways, primarily having lunch together. Here is a good example: “The Chums of Carol Keefe” consists of six to eight of us who gather every once in a while, often on the first day of school opening in September, to celebrate our no-longer-having-to-report-to-our-former jobs. Many of us, like many of you, like to toast a remembered colleague. Carol’s son-in-law regaled many of us as we said goodbye to her with our luncheon reminiscences: “A group of friends and colleagues met regularly calling it the Chums Lunch. Carol ‘had a strong constitution’ as she was the only woman among the group till Frieda joined them.”

Speaking of Carol’s work as our Albany Legislative Representative, he added that she, “..was extremely ‘proud’ on behalf of the UFT including the legislation that was enacted that teachers be paid on time (by the Board of Education) or interest would accrue” and “...walking the picket line on behalf of the nurses... who wanted to join the UFT.” Let’s all continue to get together with our colleagues and build the best memories! Do you have a lunch/dinner/theater group? Send us a photo and a few sentences and we’ll put it in either the RTC Newsletter or on our website.



Vince Gaglione, Jerry Goldman, Tom Murphy, James Tabert, Carol Keefe and Ron Jones.

Celebrating Michael Rothfeld

Retired teacher Michael Rothfeld has for years worked diligently up front and behind the scenes furthering the cause of veterans and the Veteran’s Council of St. John’s County in Florida. He produced five documentaries highlighting the service of veterans which gained state and national acclaim and have appeared on the Jacksonville PBS station, WJCT TV. Michael edits and produces a monthly newsletter, finds guest speakers, raises funds and captures the accomplishments of the council and its members with photos.

Mr. Rothfeld was recognized by the Veterans Council of St. Johns County with the Colonel George E. Taylor Award which is given to those for their service to our county’s veterans. He is also one of six honorary members of the Vietnam Veterans of America for contributing, honoring and preserving the stories of Vietnam veterans.

It is well to note: Michael is not a veteran and has not spent one day in the military. Few men in this county have accomplished as much as he has as veteran or civilian.



Michael Rothfeld receiving the Colonel George E. Taylor Award with members from the Veteran’s Council.