

## THE OBITUARY OF COMMON SENSE

The following was an "obituary" written in 1998 by Lori Borgman, then a columnist for the Indianapolis Star. We edited and amended it a bit but we think it's worth the read!

Today we mourn the passing of a beloved old friend, Common Sense, who has been with us for many years.

No one knows for sure how old he was, since his birth records were long ago lost in bureaucratic red tape. He will be remembered as having cultivated such valuable lessons as:

- Knowing when to come in out of the rain;
- Why the early bird gets the worm;
- Life isn't always fair;
- And maybe it was my fault.

Common Sense lived by simple, sound financial policies (don't spend more than you can earn) and reliable strategies (mature adults, not children, are in charge).

His health began to deteriorate rapidly when well-intentioned but overbearing regulations were set in place. Common Sense's condition only worsened on reports of teens suspended from school for using mouthwash after lunch and a teacher fired for reprimanding an unruly student.

Common Sense took a serious turn for the worse when ordinarily intelligent people stopped listening to and reading their usual reliable sources for facts and information and solely paid attention to rumors, innuendoes, gossip, and misinformation passed along in deliberately biased and social media.

Common Sense finally gave up the will to live, after a woman failed to realize that a steaming cup of coffee was hot. She spilled a little in her lap and was promptly awarded a huge settlement.

Common Sense was preceded in death,

- by his parents, Truth and Trust,
- by his wife, Discretion,
- by his daughter, Responsibility,
- and by his son, Reason.

He is survived by his stepchildren:

- I Want Something for Nothing
- I Want It Now
- Someone Else Is To Blame
- I Didn't Know
- My Friend Read It In a Group Text Chat

## RECENT BENEFIT ENHANCEMENTS

### WELFARE FUND BENEFITS

- Optional Rider reimbursement enhanced at the rate of \$840, up from a maximum of \$780 for a full 12 months, mailed in March;
- Hearing Aid Benefit, once every three years, increased by \$500 to \$1,500 effective March 1. (SHIP members get \$1,500 more).

### SHIP BENEFITS

- Increase out-of-pocket dental reimbursement by \$100 from \$300 to \$400
- Annual caps increased for surgical stockings and orthopedic shoes/foot orthotic inserts from \$2,000 to \$3,000
- Expedited technological processing of claims from weeks and months to a few days.

### AFT BENEFIT

- New Accidental Death and Disability program from the American Federation of Teachers. The AFT has arranged for all active working and retired members in good standing to have \$5,000 of AD&D coverage from a member of the Chubb Group. For information, contact AFT Member Benefits at 1-800-238-1133 or email [affplus@aff.org](mailto:affplus@aff.org).



### UFT RETIREE

Michael Mulgrew,  
UFT President  
Tom Murphy,  
Chapter Leader

Debra Penny, UFT Liaison to RTC and UFT Treasurer  
Gino Giustra, Director, Retiree Programs  
Lynn Lospenuso, Assistant Director, UFTWF Retiree Programs; Editor  
Christopher Chin, LMSW, Director, Retiree Social Services

United Federation of Teachers  
52 Broadway  
New York, NY 10004

2022-0202-2428

# RETIREE

UFT  
RTC

VOL. 34, NO. 1  
FEBRUARY 2022

THE UNITED FEDERATION OF TEACHERS RETIRED TEACHERS CHAPTER NEWSLETTER

## Congress watch

BY VINNY GAGLIONE



Since our last column, probably the biggest news from Congress was the passage of the \$1 trillion infrastructure bill. President Joe Biden signed it into law on Nov. 15, 2021. The irony, of course, is that it took a year to win bipartisan support for a bill that everyone knew was a necessity. The infrastructure legislation was a running joke during the prior administration. It was touted but never seriously pursued and took backseat to tax cuts for the rich. Mr. Biden promised it and the Democrats got it done, no easy task given reluctant Republicans in the House and Senate. But they all took credit for it at home after it passed! Ironically, on Jan. 28 of this year, just before Biden's arrival in the city to announce the benefits of the law, a local Pittsburgh bridge collapsed, fortunately without serious injuries. The country is falling apart literally and the infrastructure bill will go a long way to rebuilding it.

Infrastructure spending will go toward areas that Mr. Biden prioritized in negotiations: to improve access to broadband-internet and to replace hazardous lead drinking pipes. Some of it will help clear backlogs at the nation's ports, which are contributing to shipping delays and price increases as the United States sees a pandemic surge in demand for consumer goods, many

*continued on page 2*

## Message from Tom

BY TOM MURPHY, UFT/RTC CHAPTER LEADER



As winter gives way to spring, many of us are sick of the words omicron and delta and see light at the end of the tunnel. But if you are a bit of a doubting Thomas like me, we just want to make sure that we're not victims of that old joke that warns, it might be the light of an oncoming locomotive. Let's assume the best in our good old union optimistic tradition. We have been preparing for not just a normality but a new normality. The passing of the pre-pandemic way of doing things gives us an opportunity to hold on to what is salvageable, keep what we've learned along the way and chart new, adventurous ways of operating.

Goodbye to isolated, limited in-person meetings that only allowed those nearby to participate. But hold on to the in-person dynamics that formed important connections with one another. Can we have both somehow? We know that RTC meetings, which once had a few hundred physical participants at most, have given way to virtual zoom meetings that draw thousands, not limited by geography, time or space. How do we incorporate the best of both? The Retiree Learning Center is leading the way with some experimental hybrid courses. When it is safe to do so, it is my intention to try a few hybrid RTC General Membership Meetings broadcast from Albert Shanker Hall on the second floor of UFT headquarters. We have not yet mastered how to have interactive meetings as the "chat" featured is currently unwieldy when several thousand members are signed in to a Zoom meeting. But we'll find a way.

During the rollout of the new NYC Medicare Advantage Plus health plan, our meetings focus has largely been on that and other membership benefits including pension, UFT Welfare Fund, SHIP, Social Services and the Retiree Learning Center offerings. But the world outside has not stopped spinning while we dealt with internal needs and benefits. Those of course are essentials but they don't exist in a bubble. The political, legislative and social world impacts these essentials and it's time for the RTC to resume its interaction with them. After all, we have been called the Daytime Union and Daytime Army. We ignore the public forum at our peril. In the near future, we will invite public leaders back to our meetings and engage once more in worthy union causes.

The light at the end of the tunnel beckons us and we'll welcome it unafraid as we emerge from this survival mode into one of progress.

of which are imported. The bill provides tens of billions for rebuilding roads and bridges, upgrading freight and passenger rail systems and cleaning up environmental pollution, all of which could help boost the productivity of the American economy. Mr. Biden appointed Mitch Landrieu, the former mayor of New Orleans, to oversee implementation of the infrastructure bill.

Mr. Biden was hoping for bipartisan support for his **Build Back Better** legislation. It sailed through the House with full Democratic support. The legislation has been stymied in the Senate by both Republican recalcitrance, the filibuster, and some Democratic stubbornness, namely Joe Manchin and Kyrsten Sinema, who are withholding support for parts of the bill and refusing to eliminate the filibuster. The intention now is to break up the legislation into smaller pieces and pass those that have support.

Other legislation that has failed to win bipartisan support includes several voting rights bills: the **For the People Act** and the **John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act of 2021 (H.R. 4)**, legislation that would restore and strengthen parts of the Voting Rights Act of 1965. Both failed to garner the 60 votes required for passage. Democrats Manchin and Sinema, again, publicly refused to dispose of the filibuster for passage.

Probably the most fascinating of Congressional activities these days is the House committee investigating the U.S. Capitol insurrection and the attempts to overturn the results of the 2020 election. Some of the stories coming out of the committee can only be construed by a reasonable person as depicting treasonous behavior. Former President Donald Trump daily continues to lie about alleged election fraud, despite even Republican-sponsored reviews of balloting and recounts in various states that found no evidence to support his claims. Mr. Trump has publicly stated that, if re-elected, he will pardon the Jan. 6 Capitol rioters. Worse still, in recent weeks, we're receiving more news reports about attempts by local and federal officials to subvert the constitutional process for counting and accepting electoral votes from the states. Former Vice President Mike Pence, when he was chair of the Senate, admirably observed constitutional principles. The facts are tantamount to listening to plans for a coup. The doublespeak, the fudging of facts, the prevarications and contradictions of those who are reluctant to testify, for we educators, their words ring familiar. They are like a bunch of kids trying to excuse themselves for not doing their homework. Let me tell you: I knew kids who could lie better!

## YOUR HEALTHCARE BY VINNY GAGLIONE

*As chair of the Standing UFT RTC HealthCare Committee, I suggested to RTC Chair Tom Murphy that we include a regular column in this newsletter that will be of value to our retirees and/or their caregivers. We hope to make the information invaluable to you.*

The UFT RTC Chapter's pages on the UFT's website has information about all the healthcare benefits to which we are entitled. Have you used it? Have you seen it? If not, it's simple to find:

First, visit the UFT website, [www.UFT.org](http://www.UFT.org). Hover over the words in white, "Your Benefits," next to the UFT logo and click on "Health Benefits." Scroll down a little and you'll see a box with a photo and the words, "Retiree benefits." Click on "Learn more," and you're now looking at all the information you need as a retiree.

The chapter has been sending out regular email newsletters regarding the new Medicare Advantage Plus Plan. Call the following numbers with questions or problems: the insurance company at **833-325-1190** or the UFT Welfare Fund at **212-539-0500**. You can also email at [healthbenefithelp@uftwf.org](mailto:healthbenefithelp@uftwf.org)

*continued on page 3*

*The following screenshots contain information about Retired Teachers Chapter benefits and social information. To access this information go to [www.uft.org/chapters/retired-teachers-chapter](http://www.uft.org/chapters/retired-teachers-chapter).*

