

CITATION

CENTRAL ISLIP TEACHERS ASSOCIATION, LOCAL 2552, NYSUT, AFT, AFL-CIO
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United We Stand, Divided We Fall

by Michele Celenza

I've had to resurrect a title from an article written back in November of 2015. At that time we were dealing with Arne Duncan being replaced by Dr. John King Jr. Well, just when you think the state of education can't get worse, it seems it just did! Our newly elected president's choice for Education Secretary was Betsy DeVos and then in an unprecedented vote, Vice President Pence cast the tie breaking vote. Anyone who attended the rallies last year in Central Islip and Brentwood speaking against Charter Schools now need to gather together friends and family to prepare for a greater confrontation.

It seems our country will now be run by multi-billionaires who do not know the first thing about the realities of our world. Trump has put his cronies in offices where life changing decisions will be made that affect everyone but them. For many their only qualification is their net worth. Betsy DeVos is all about privatizing public education which would benefit her stakeholders and destroy public education as we know it. This point was proven in Michigan where she used her own wealth to keep Charter Schools growing and unregulated. Student achievement rates in Michigan took a nose-dive. We have been working diligently to improve student scores here in Central Islip. A recent State visit applauded our successes and areas of growth. I have no doubt that the upcoming State visits to other Central Islip schools will yield similar outcomes. We are on the right track moving towards raising student achievement and college and career ready young adults. We can't allow our public education system to be defunded so that for-profit charter schools can take over. Central Islip teachers along with teachers across this state work too hard to see that happen.

This problem is two-fold for us in New York.

Many articles in our last CITATION issue focused on the NY State Constitutional Convention looming over our heads. This has many serious possible consequences for the overall population in New York, not just educators. This could affect public education, collective bargaining, our retirement security as we know it, and much more. Point being that we can't be complacent and have the mindset that others will stand up for us and validate our valiant efforts and dedication to our students and their futures. Every single one of us has to be an active participant in the battles set before us. No one should be sitting on their couch spouting an excuse as to why they can't address envelopes, make phone calls, attend a rally or any other call to action. Over the years I have seen the same faces stepping up to show unity and defending what we know to be right. At this time everyone needs to do their part. There is too much to be lost not to take part. Don't be a part of the problem step up to be a part of the solution.

"The sum of us is greater than all our parts."

-Maya Angelou



- *Donate to the
CITA Scholarship Fund!**
- *Get your opt out letters in
for your own children!**
- *Volunteer at a CITA function!**
- *Defend public education!**



From the President's Desk

Michael Romano, President
Central Islip Teachers Association

2017 is well underway and the education outlook is absolutely miserable in the United States. We now have a Secretary of Education in the form of Betsy DeVos who believes that guns should be kept in schools to guard against "potential grizzlies!" As a science teacher with 28 years of experience I can safely say to each and every one of you that the only Grizzly bears in New York State are securely maintained in zoological parks. As if the grizzly situation wasn't bad enough, she also pointed out how the traditionally black colleges in America were an example of the successes of the idea of school choice. Of course she may be totally unaware that the genesis of these fine institutions was the total lack of choice available to black students at that time!! Black students were not allowed to attend the "white" universities in the south. They had NO CHOICE and would have received NO EDUCATION had it not been for the black universities. These comments came from the Secretary of Education, an office which is now occupied by this woman with ZERO educational experience, who NEVER attended public schools, and in my opinion is only there because of massive campaign contributions.

On the union front my report is equally dreary. NYSUT President Karen Magee is being given a golden parachute to a

position at AFT under Randi Weingarten to get her out of office. Why is this happening you may ask? It is happening because Andy Pallotta is just as unhappy with her ignorance and boorish behavior as he was with the intellectual oversight and true leadership that he had to endure when Dick Iannuzzi was there. Andy Pallotta will be the next NYSUT President. Long Island will be represented solely by current NYSUT Vice-President Paul Pecorale. Let me be clear: it is my opinion that Paul is a puppet, and an ineffectual one at that. Andy and UFT President Mike Mulgrew are calling all of the shots. What works for New York City does NOT work for the suburban and rural districts in the state. Andy and his slate will be opposed by a slate from the Stronger Together Caucus led by Michael Lillis. This slate is the true education slate in New York. It is the slate the the CITA will be supporting at this April's Representative Assembly in the city. Mr. Lillis cannot win as the the vote is rigged in favor of the UFT supported candidates. This is a very bad time at NYSUT if you are a suburban or rural district.

A divided NYSUT coupled with Betsy DeVos and the upcoming Constitutional Convention vote could spell disaster for us all.



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Central Islip Teachers Association

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Vincent Ruggiero

Political Action

Christian Pisano

Professional Rights and Responsibilities

Adrian Gonzalez

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Melissa Romano

Teacher Education and Professional Standing

Michele Celenza



A F L • C I O

Get the Facts About a Constitutional Convention

by Tom Kuhn, Vice President



Under the New York State Constitution, the people of the Empire State are asked every 20 years a seemingly simple ballot question: "Shall there be a convention to revise the constitution and amend same?" These 12 simple words will appear on the top of the ballot on November 7, 2017, and could have a huge impact on us and every citizen of the state. All of us, from retirees, teachers and school staff, higher education faculty, and health care and human service professionals to the children who will enter pre-K or college the very next year, have a stake in the outcome of this very important vote.

Why is this important to me as a

CITA member?

First, the constitution establishes a basic organizational structure for the state government. If changes are made that give too much power to one branch, for example say the executive, then our system of representative governance will be upended.

Second the constitution establishes the fundamental rights you enjoy as a citizen of New York State and as a public employee. Some of these include:

- Guaranteeing the right for a free public education
- Prohibiting reductions in public pension benefits
- Rights to workers' compensation
- Rights to be a member of a union and bargain collectively

Third, the constitution sets

the most important policy goals for the people of New York State, and thus, has an impact on every other law currently in place and on statutes yet to come.

What can I do?

Because 2017 is an "off" election year for the State Legislature, as well as an "off" election year for presidential voting, we must concentrate our efforts on this important issue. You need to get involved, stay active with the political process starting today, keep informed on the important issues surrounding a constitutional convention and be ready to VOTE NO on Tuesday, November 7, 2017 and start spreading the word now to our colleagues, friends and families to do the same.

The Scholarship Drive is in Full Swing

by Jennifer Cicero



The 2017 Scholarship Drive is in full swing. Interviews for potential scholarship recipients will be held on May 1st, so we will need to know exactly how much money the CITA will be donating at that time. It is impossible for me to thank each and every person who donates which is why I am writing this article. I know it seems like the Community Liaison and Scholarship Committees are always asking for something. Whether it is your money, non-perishable food, or your time, we always need your help. And when it comes to the scholarship drive,

you never let us down. When I say "us," I mean not only the committee but the students who desperately need our help. Every penny that the Scholarship Committee collects goes directly to the students. So every donation counts! Thank you to everyone that has already donated. You're making dreams come true!

Please see me or another Scholarship Committee member as soon as possible to make your donation. You can make checks payable to the CITA Scholarship Fund. If you don't usually contribute, I ask that you reconsider. This is for the children of this great community. They need our help. We are asking for **thirty dollar (\$30) or more** from every CITA member. Below

is a list of the scholarship committee members in each building who are collecting. Let's have another amazing year of contributions. Our students deserve it. **And remember, every donation counts!!**

The scholarship committee members are Charlene Murphy – ECC, Yanick Frederic – Cordello, Yvette Eliard-Liburd & Jill Esposito – O'Neill, Christine Wesnofske – Mulvey, Siobhan Brunkard and Jill Esposito – Morrow, Jennifer Flynn & Gwen Jacobowitz – Mulligan, Allison Dorn & Maria LaRocca – Reed, and Jennifer Cicero, Fran Alabau, Greg Alpers, Bob Bonfe, Orlando Diaz, Amy Harrington and Sandy Morrow – High School.

January is NOT the Month for Awards

by Jennifer Cicero

Two years ago it was snow. Last year, it wasn't cancelled, but it was a close call! This year it was wind and rain! January has not been a good month for Awards Night! For the last 3 years, the Community Liaison Committee has been keeping their fingers crossed about the Awards Night in January. It is always hard to reschedule due to the availability of the auditorium. Not to mention the giant sheet cakes that we get stuck with! We are going to try next year to avoid January all together. We are going to see about having the three

Awards Nights in March, April and May. With that being said, the Awards Night has been rescheduled for Monday, April 24th at 7pm. Another letter will be sent out to the parents and another volunteer flyer will be put out. We hope that you can make it.

So mark your calendars! The Awards Nights are March 27th, April 24th and May 15th. Movie Night is Friday, April 21st. All are at 7pm in the High School Auditorium. We will be needing a lot of help on those nights and we know we can count on you!

The Importance of IDEA

by Vincent Ruggiero



With the exception of some limited knowledge of Wyoming's habitat, January's Secretary of Education nomination meeting proved one thing: Betsy DeVos has an incomplete understanding of public education programs, more specifically, special education.

During her confirmation hearing, Betsy DeVos displayed what can only be described a clear lack of knowledge and application concerning the impact of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Her comments on special education left parents and educators around the country questioning her awareness of the needs of students with disabilities and their rights under our current laws.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act was originally enacted by Congress in 1975 to ensure that children with disabilities have the opportunity, like all children, to receive a free appropriate public education. While the law has been revised several times, the original purpose of protecting the rights of children with disabilities and giving parents a voice

in their child's education still remain the cornerstone components of the law. Today, over 6 million children receive special education services. Students who are not eligible for support under IDEA, may instead be entitled for educational support under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act.

For over 40 years, this landmark legislation has supported public school children in meeting their identified challenges and addressing them. The concern, of course, is the next 40 years and beyond. To continue to meet the needs and protect the rights of special education students, the foundational components of IDEA should not only be maintained, but strengthened. Improving educational results for children with disabilities requires the continued implementation of IDEA; a belief contrary to Betsy DeVos' perceived comments during her confirmation hearing.

One of the many hallmarks of public education is the unbiased and appropriate education for all children. It should never be a question or "an issue that's best left up to the states."



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Facebook



Keep Unions Alive and Strong

by Adrian Gonzalez



If being a teacher and union member sometimes makes you feel that you're under constant attack, it's because you are! The uphill battle and the fight to maintain what teachers have worked hard for never ends. Around every corner, there is a different challenge that we face. Together,

we must face these challenges head-on and with brute force. The next four years (only four years with strength and hope) are going to prove to be very challenging for teachers' unions, as well as other unions. Now, more than ever, we must band together and be ONE!

Let's look at the wise words of two men, one famous and one not so famous:

"Our labor unions are not narrow, self-seeking groups. They have raised wages, shortened hours and provided supplemental benefits. Through collective bargaining and grievance procedures, they have brought justice and democracy to the shop floor." - John F. Kennedy

"Take out public sector workers like teachers and police officers, and only 6.7 percent of private sector workers are unionized. Eliminating the last few unions that protect a small slice of workers would hardly reverse job loss or have much effect on the cost

of living, and it sure as hell won't 'make America great again.' It would serve to only further erode the ever dwindling chance for someone to achieve a small slice of the American Dream." - Tom Kannar, letter to the editor, "Don't Blame Unions," *The Desert Sun*, March 30, 2016

Mr. Kennedy's words speak for themselves and underscore the importance of unions and how they have helped to enhance, not only working conditions, but lifestyles. With the strength of the union, we are able to provide each member with a sense of self-worth and appreciation for the job they do each and every day.

Mr. Kannar's remarks were in response to a letter to the editor of *The Desert Sun*, a newspaper published in Palm Springs, California. A woman had previously written to the editor blaming unions for jobs being outsourced and Oreos being made in Mexico (maybe she likes the double-stuffed Oreo triple-stuffed, that's why she's upset). If we are to live the American Dream and make America great again, we need to strengthen and preserve unions, not abolish them.

In the coming months and years, remember to join your Brothers and Sisters in keeping unions alive and strong! Do your part to make the American Dream possible for generations to come.

HOT TOPICS

Wouldn't it be great to see what interesting things go on in other classrooms? Collectively we are such a diverse group with differing outlooks and unique ideas. If you would like to share something you have done with your class that was well received and engaging then email it to me and I will include it in future CITATION editions.

Michele Celenza, Mulvey School
TEPS/New Member Chairperson
mcelenzacita@gmail.com

Classroom Management:

In order to ensure that each student gets chosen throughout the day for questioning, I write each child's name on a clothespin. When I'm going over homework or classwork, I choose a clothespin to answer the question. Every child needs to pay attention and every child is being called upon throughout the day.

This also allows for me to quickly make groups or pairs when working together.

Submitted by Megan Grabowski
5th Grade Teacher, Mulvey

Have a Safe Second Half of the School Year

by Patrick Murphy

Each month the Health and Welfare Committee participates in building inspections of the Central Islip School District. The committee consists of Mr. William Softy and Mr. Glenn Mitchell (Co-Chairs/Board of Education members), Mr. Matthew Providente (Director of Building and Grounds) CSEA representative, PTA representative, CIBPA representative, community members, lead custodian for each respective building, District Clerk, as well as myself representing the CITA. As we begin the month of March and head towards the end of the school year, I would like to take this opportunity to list items that are found in the buildings that we as CITA members can do in our classrooms to help in a successful and safe end of the 2016-17 school year. Fixing these items will ensure that the district would not be subject to any safety violations if inspected by the New York State Department of Education or by the Suffolk County Fire Marshal.

-All emergency windows must be free from any obstruction. Items such as book shelves, storage units, desks, plants, books, push carts, classroom mailboxes, etc. cannot block the emergency window. This window must also be labeled. If it is not please see your building custodian to have it labeled.

-Electrical items, not approved by the district, cannot be in your classrooms. If you have a question or a need about a particular item please ask your building principal or custodian.

-No items can be hanging from the blinds in the classrooms.

-Classrooms with an overcrowding and a buildup of paper, books, and boxes should be condensed as this increases the fire load of each classroom in the event

of an emergency.

Should you have a building safety concern or issue, please follow the steps below:

-Notify the lead building custodian about the issue and complete a work order for the issue or concern.

-Make a copy of the work order for your records.

-If the items have not been completed in a timely fashion, or have gotten worse see a building representative so that the item may get into your building committee agenda so that the building principal is made aware.

-Send a copy of the work order to me at the Reed School so that I may begin contacting the district to see about the issue being fixed.

-Please give consideration that not all concerns can be fixed overnight and may take some time depending on the issue. Under no circumstance should any CITA member contact central administration before letting the Health and Welfare Committee know.

For any building safety concern feel free to contact me at any time. I can be reached at 631-236-8744 or by email at cifd99@hotmail.com. The Health and Welfare Committee is here to help in any way we can for all safety concerns. Any non-safety concern please contact Mrs. Maureen Esposito (Chairperson) at the O'Neill School. Her number is in the CITA directory. At any time during the school year if you have a question, or a concern, and need me to come to your building to speak to you in person or look at the issue just contact me and we can set up a date and time. On behalf of the Health and Welfare committee we would like to wish all CITA members a safe second half of the 2016-2017 school year.

"So here is my advice: Opt out. Stop the machine that produces the data that are used to label your children, to fire his teachers, to close his school. Take away the data and insist that teachers deal with the needs of every child. Do not feed the machine built in D.C. or at Pearson. Be strategic. Do the one thing that only you have the power to do: deny them the data. Use the power you have. Save the children. Save your schools. Save your community."

-Diane Ravitch

We Must Continue to Fight

by Christian Pisano



President Donald Trump has made it abundantly clear that he is making good on one of his campaign promises. Selecting fellow Education Secretary Betsy DeVos only confirms how serious he is on ruining public education. His educational priorities are evident by providing funding for school choice, vouchers and tax scholarships.

Recently, Trump and DeVos visited a catholic school in Florida. So their first trip together was to a parochial school where they would continue their ideological crusade. Let us be reminded that DeVos has long advocated for Charter Schools and publicly funded vouchers which would allow students to attend private, parochial, or even home-schools, on the backs of the tax payers. Trump is a huge advocate for privatizing education. He must understand that education is not just one of his commodities.

Teachers' unions, parents, and politicians must continue to fight for public education. Whether your local union is asking for your support through letter

writing campaigns, phone banks, or just educating the community, we must all do our part. Critics will continue to state the problems of public education except stating the truth. The deepest challenges we face in public education stems from social and economic inequities. Families are already politically disenfranchised because of the political bureaucracy that allows communities to become divided. Low income-high taxed communities are not given the tools that are needed to succeed.

Trump and Devos are both billionaires who only care about profits. Education is big business. Throughout history, politician/businessman have figured out ways to make millions on the back of public education. Not too long ago, the fight was against standardized testing and common core. Those individuals and corporations involved made millions and now a new agenda unfolds. When are certain individuals going to care about our students and the quality of education they truly deserve? Keep fighting for public education. We must ensure that we live in a democratic society that serves the needs of all individuals.

Planning on Retiring? CITA Retiree Reflections

Planning on Retiring?
Complete the Retiree Questionnaire
on pages 8-9
and submit it along with a photo that you
would like to be published in the
CITation by Friday, April 21st
to Tara Maguire at O'Neill School or
email your responses to
citamemberservices@gmail.com.
The article will be published in the
May/June Citation.





You're Retiring

Congratulations on your upcoming retirement! Please take a moment to reflect on your career at the Central Islip School District by completing the questionnaire below. Your responses will be included in the upcoming CITATION. Please return to Tara Maguire @ O'Neill School by Friday, April 21st.

- 1 *How many years have you been working in the Central Islip School District? _____*

- 2 *What position(s) have you filled during your career? _____*

- 3 *Who were people you considered mentors as you began and/or continued through your career? Why? _____*

- 4 *What is your most memorable teaching experience? _____*

- 5 *What advice would you like to offer to your CITA brothers and sisters? __*

- 6 *What are your future plans as you embark on this new journey in your life? _____*

Save The Date

Tuesday, March 21 & Thursday March 23:

Spring Driver Safety Course at the ECC

Monday, March 27:

Standards Scholars Awards Night 7:00 CIHS Auditorium

Friday, April 21:

CITA Movie Night 7:00 CIHS Auditorium (Volunteers arrive at 6:00)

Monday, April 24:

Standards Scholars Awards Night 7:00 CIHS Auditorium

Monday, May 15:

Standards Scholars Awards Night 7:00 CIHS Auditorium

Friday, June 2:

CITA End of the Year Party RSVPs and Payment due to Tara Maguire @ O'Neill

Thursday, June 15:

CITA End of the Year Party at Stonebridge Country Club in Smithtown from 5:30 to 10:30



CITA End of the Year Party

Save the Date: Thursday, June 15th

On Thursday, June 15th from 5:30 pm to 10:30 pm we will be celebrating the end of the school year at the CITA End of the Year Party. CITA will be honoring our retirees and newly tenured members and acknowledging our new members and their buddies.

Save the date and join us at the Stonebridge Country Club
at 2000 Raynor's Way in Smithtown.

Top Hat Entertainment will be providing the music entertainment for the evening.
If you would like to request a song, kindly complete the slip below, and return it to
Tara Maguire at the O'Neill School.

Directions to the Stonebridge Country Club:

FROM L.I.E.EAST OR WEST

Long Island Expressway to Exit 56 North. Travel North on Rte.111, (Rte. 111 turns left at Jade Garden Restaurant), proceed to Rte. 347, make left. Stonebridge Country Club is on Rte. 347 approximately $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile on the right-hand side. (Look for ZZs Grille)

FROM NORTHERN STATE PARKWAY

Northern State Pkwy. To the end onto Vets Hwy 347/454.

Make your way into the left-hand lane. After the 7th traffic light make a U Turn (Adjacent to Carvel). After making U Turn get into the right lane, Stonebridge will be approx. 1000 feet on the right-hand side. (Look for ZZs Grille)

Song Request

Name: _____

Song Title: _____

Song Artist: _____





Empire Safety Council's Drivers Safety Course

**When: Tuesday, March 21st & Thursday, March 23rd
from 4:00 pm-7:00 pm**

Where: ECC Multipurpose Room

**Complete the form below and submit with a \$27.00
registration fee check payable to Anthony Palumbo to
Mary Csorny at the ECC by Friday, March 17th.**

You may bring a light snack and beverage to the course.

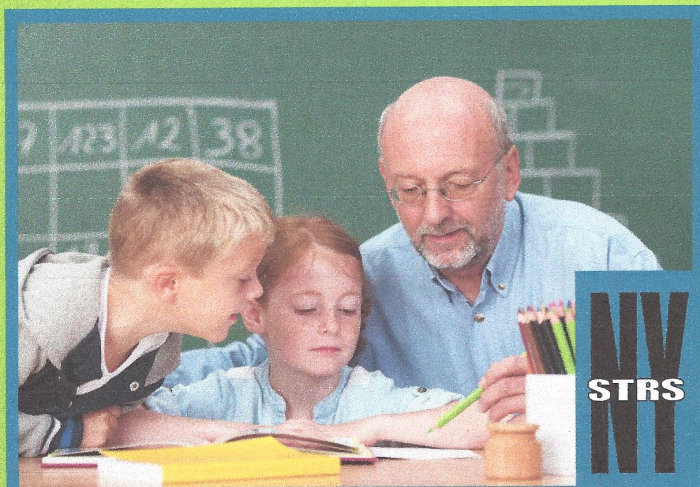
**Family and friends may register for the course too!
You must bring your license/picture ID to the course. You
need to be present both days to receive credit for the
course.**

Name: _____ School: _____

Contact Number: _____ Check # _____



Looking to the Future



Stage 3: Retirement is Within Reach

You are dedicated to educating children and helping them prepare for a bright, successful future. At the New York State Teachers' Retirement System (NYSTRS), we are committed to helping you make sound financial decisions throughout your career in preparation for a rewarding retirement.

In *Looking to the Future*, presented as a three-part series, we share typical perspectives teachers have at various stages of their careers about planning for retirement.

- 📌 **Stage 1: Early in Your Career:** A look at what's called the "accumulation years" and why it's important retirement savings be among the items you accumulate.
- 📌 **Stage 2: Midway to Retirement:** An examination of key financial decisions you should make in your 30s and 40s to set yourself up for the future.
- 📌 **Stage 3: Retirement is Within Reach:** A list of actions you should take to ensure you maximize your retirement benefits and select the payment option that's appropriate to you.

For each stage we will tell you what NYSTRS-specific tools and services are available to help you with your planning. While we cannot provide general financial-planning advice, NYSTRS should be your primary source of information when it comes to your public pension benefits.

Enjoy the journey!

Almost There

You've made your decision; it's time to consider retiring. You still love what you're doing, but you know the time is right. You can afford to retire and do all the things you have been dreaming about.

Our goal is to help you retire knowing you have done everything possible to receive all the benefits for which you are eligible as a member of this System.

"My countdown to retirement has begun! Although I'm excited for this next stage of my life, I'm having mixed feelings. I know I'll miss teaching, but I'm also looking forward to the opportunities retirement has to offer."

What Now?

Attend a Presentation

Ask your employer or Retirement System delegate to arrange for a NYSTRS representative to conduct a benefits workshop or presentation at your school. The information can be tailored to meet the needs of those who are retiring, addressing specific topics such as local or state incentives, or the impact of new legislation.

Also, if you haven't already attended a NYSTRS Pension & Retirement Education Program (PREP) you should do so now. Although some of the material covered will involve long-range planning, the information is valuable.

RETIREMENT IS WITHIN REACH | 1

Meet With a Representative

Early in the school year in which you plan to retire, you should schedule an in-person or video consultation with a System representative at a site near you or at System offices in Albany. Unless it is close to home, it is not necessary to travel to Albany for a consultation. All of the help and information you need is available in your area.

At this meeting you can review your service credit history again. You may want to update your benefit estimate if you know salary information, including local incentives, bonuses or payment for unused leave. You can also obtain the necessary forms for retirement and review the instructions for filing them. Visit the Benefits Consultations page of our website at NYSTRS.org for information on scheduling a consultation and the sites at which they are held.

If a one-on-one meeting is simply not possible, you can always request a personalized estimate by calling (800) 348-7298, Ext. 6020 or using the *Benefit Estimate Request* form found at NYSTRS.org.

Review Your Records

When you receive your *Benefit Profile* or view it online through MyNYSTRS, make sure our records are consistent with yours — particularly the service credit and salary information. If there are adjustments to be made, start the process now so your benefit payments will be accurate. If you have any questions, call (800) 348-7298, Ext. 6250.

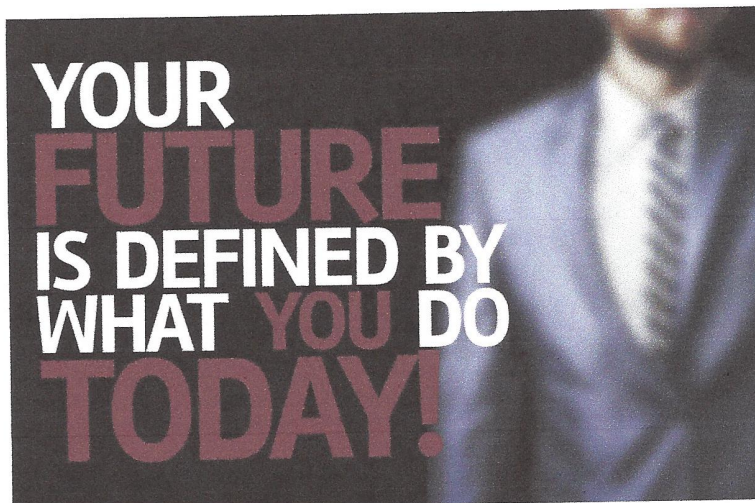
Other Resources

NYSTRS has two helpful resources to guide members through the year leading to retirement. The *Countdown to Retirement* pamphlet and *Retirement Countdown* video review the steps to take in your final year at work.

Each follows a school-year timeline, beginning with appropriate steps to take during the fall months and culminating with filing for retirement in the spring in anticipation of a July 1 retirement. Also see the companion publication *A Seasonable Approach to Retiring*.

Key points covered in these resources include:

- ✓ How to get the best information;
- ✓ When to file your retirement application;
- ✓ What to do when legislation that may impact you is pending;
- ✓ When to make the decision on an option or life insurance for your beneficiary;
- ✓ When to expect your first benefit payment;
- ✓ The deadline for withdrawing your application or changing your retirement date; and,
- ✓ When to file for Social Security benefits if you're eligible.



6 Steps to Collecting Your Retirement Benefit



1. Attend a PREP Seminar

These free seminars, offered year-round and open to all, cover NYSTRS benefits, financial planning, Social Security, estate planning and more. MyNYSTRS account holders can make reservations online. All others call (800) 348-7298, Ext. 6180.

2. Schedule a Consultation

Meet with a NYSTRS representative, in person or by live video, to discuss your retirement questions. Run estimates for different retirement dates and discuss the various payment options available to you. Book an appointment through MyNYSTRS or call (800) 348-7298, Ext. 6100.

3. Understand Your Payment Options Before Choosing

Members who select the wrong payment option often face difficult financial and emotional challenges later. Avoid this mistake at all costs! Read our pamphlet *Maximum or an Option: Choosing a Benefit Payment Right for You*, available in the Library at NYSTRS.org.

4. Apply for Retirement With NYSTRS

Retiring from your employer does NOT automatically trigger retirement benefit payments. You must also file an *Application for Retirement* (RET-54) with the Retirement System in order to receive your monthly pension payment.

5. Know When to File Your Retirement Application

File too early (more than 90 days before your official date of retirement) and the application will not be valid. File on your date of retirement if you wish, but make sure your date of retirement is at least one day after your contract with your employer expires. File in early June if you want to receive your first payment in July. If you're retiring near a service milestone, file as late as you're comfortable with. Doing so will increase the odds that your preliminary and final benefit payment amounts will be similar.

6. Remember: You Have a Limited Window for Withdrawing or Changing the Terms of Your Retirement.

From your date of retirement you have 14 days to withdraw your retirement application and 30 days to change your benefit payment option. NYSTRS must receive the paperwork no later than day 14 or 30. State law does not allow for exceptions.

Congratulations!

You're either close to filing for retirement or you're at least giving it strong consideration. We hope the information we've provided throughout your career has helped you plan. Don't hesitate to contact us if we can be of any further assistance.

Wishing you a happy and healthy retirement!

New York State Teachers' Retirement System

10 CORPORATE WOODS DRIVE
ALBANY, NY 12211
(800) 348-7298



NYSTRS.ORG



The CIRTA Retiree

**CENTRAL ISLIP RETIRED TEACHERS ASSOCIATION
AFFILIATED WITH NYSUT RETIREE COUNCIL ED #21,
LOCAL 9521R**

by Nancy Porta Libert

Déjà Vu All Over Again

A heartwarming, human interest story would have been a soothing elixir this month. And I might have written it, too, if I hadn't caved in to my grave concern about the change of leadership at the Environmental Protection Agency. By coming of age in the fifties instead of the sixties, I didn't have the opportunity to take part in that generation's dedicated and energetic efforts to raise public awareness of the environmental threats facing our nation. But the nascent movement awakened my sensitivity to the issue and captivated me. A reading of Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*, and subsequent evidence of pollution's serious consequences put me in the "green" camp forever.

The planet has taken a heavy hit since the Industrial Revolution. As technology improved and industry expanded, a combination of ignorance and willful disregard for the environment transformed the way we lived. What once included compost heaps and the use of natural products as a way of life now includes washing machines, air conditioners, electronic tools, and supersonic jets as well as plumes, poisonous industrial waste, pollution of land, sea and air, and gradual global warming with its promise of natural disasters. Life is easier, but at a price that should greatly alarm everyone.

Through the last half century, environmental protection legislation has been passed by both Republican and Democratic administrations. Democrats have done far more of the heavy lifting but let's not forget that Richard Nixon, by executive order, created the EPA, and signed the Clean Air Act. George H.W. Bush put his pen to the Clean Air Act amendments of 1990, another huge step forward. Since then, environmental not-for-profit groups, the strong support of a large percentage of the population, and increasing scientific evidence of unacceptable dangers have put the issue of saving the planet, and by association, its inhabitants, on one of the front burners.

Then along came the 2016 election and agendas dedicated to "the deconstruction of the administrative state," to quote Steve Bannon. With former Oklahoma Attorney General Scott Pruitt at the head of EPA, deregulation very quickly got underway. The first target was killing the Obama-era regulations that prevented coal companies from dumping mining debris into streams and waterways. An environmental report estimates that strip mining has buried about 2,000 miles of waterways since the 1990's, but that fact, and the resulting

environmental impact it no doubt had, is no match for campaign promises. There has even been talk of dismantling the agency, itself.

Cause for concern? You bet. Simple things in nature are related to complex things in nature. We are so full of ourselves because we've made such great strides scientifically and technologically that we don't realize the joke's on us. The planet sustains us, not the other way around. A healthy planet, that is.

The warning bells have rung. Americans must once again stand up. We must prevent the ravaging of environmental protections so long fought for, so hard-won, and now, more critical than ever. May we never forget: we are the stewards of Earth.

An Opportunity To Stand Up And Be Counted

The People's Climate Movement has called for a national protest in response to the administration's environmental policies and recent actions. More than 40 organizations have formed a steering committee to put plans in place for a Climate March on Washington, D.C., Saturday, April 29. It is expected that marches will also take place in major cities across the country and across the globe on that day.

While plans are still in formative stages due to the enormity of the task, the date is secure and information between now and then will be available on the internet. Check in with peoplesclimate.org or simply plug in Peoples Climate March, April 29. Organizers are hoping for record turnouts to underscore how upset the nation is with the Trump administration's announced plans to disarm the EPA.

Millions of Americans know that it is unconscionable to destroy the environment to rescue industries that not only pollute, but whose "day in the sun" is well over. Letting our representatives know our feelings is an essential part of the effort.

I'm planning to go to D.C. but failing that, I'll go into the city. Climate activist Bill McKibben describes his motivation for being there: "I'm going to show that the election didn't cancel physics."

Let's Get Together!

**Join us for coffee and bagels at our next open
CIRTA meeting on Wednesday, March 22, 10 am,
in the 3rd floor NYSUT offices at Citibank,
150 Motor Parkway, Hauppauge.**