

Spotlight 21

SERVING RETIREES FROM

Bay Shore Brentwood East Islip West Islip
Bayport-Blue Point Central Islip Islip Sayville
Connetquot



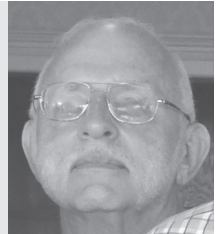
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April - May, 2017

Visit our webpage: <http://ny.aft.org/rc21> for the expanded color version of the Spotlight.

A Message From Co-President Michael Eiermann



What if...?

What if the people of New York State vote for a constitutional convention on November 7, 2017?

The process will begin with the selection of delegates – 3 per state Senate District plus 15 - at large, 204 in total. They will be elected at the next general election, November 6, 2018. The delegates will then convene in April, 2019 in Albany to begin their meetings, set their agenda, deliberate the issues, and publish their recommendations. Their proposed changes are then submitted to the voters – either individually or as a group or groups – for their approval in a referendum held no sooner than six months after the adjournment of the convention.

During the run-up to this November's general election, you will be deluged with information in the media, the press, blogs, emails, etc. in an effort to convince you to vote 'yes' on the constitutional convention question. Convention supporters will advocate for a '**peoples convention**' that will zero in on **ideas and goals so progressive that you will begin to question why anyone would ask you to vote 'no.'** BEWARE OF THE HYPE! Once a convention opens the state constitution for review, not only can new statements of rights and freedoms be added, but there is the possibility that existing guarantees can be compromised or eliminated.

A Peoples' Convention: Any individual old enough to vote can serve as a delegate. Of course, they will have to organize a staff to circulate petitions, raise money for a campaign to get their name before the public, and not be encumbered by a job so that they can serve for an indeterminate period of time once the conventions meets. These pre-conditions would explain why of the 187 delegates at the last convention in 1967, 13 were members of the state legislature, 24 were judges, and the vast majority of the rest were local political office holders. The candidates ran on partisan platforms with the support of the major political parties. Very few of the delegates were 'ordinary' people. **So much for a Peoples' Convention!**

What could we lose?

- Developers gaining access to our 'forever wild' parklands.
- Legitimization of fracking, a process that has had a ruinous environmental impact in other states.
- Repeal of the Blaine Amendment that prohibits the diversion public funds to religious schools.
- Loss of the right of workers to unionize and negotiate terms of employment.
- The right to an education circumscribed so that districts do not have to meet all the needs of our challenged students.
- An increase in the number of charter schools.
- Additional communities open to casinos.
- Increase in the state debt limits.
- The Southern Tier might actually try to use a convention to secede from the state...and the list goes on and on.

What might retirees lose?

Right now the state constitution guarantees that your pension cannot be diminished. Our pension system is fully funded because the TRS Board controls how the money is used and can assess districts for the necessary financial contributions. Absent politics, it is the safest fund in the country. All of that could change with a constitutional convention. **Should the constitutional guarantee be eliminated or the powers of the TRS Board be diminished, the financial security of all New York State public retirees could be compromised.**

During the last ten years, 10 states each year have enacted pension 'reforms.' Examples:

- 28 states eliminated COLAs, and 14 took COLAs away from prior retirees.
- Detroit, Michigan and Rhode Island reduced pensions 3% despite constitutional guarantees because the systems were not properly funded.
- New Jersey's system is only 30% funded because the state had the power to raid the pension fund and has not repaid it. *(continued on page 2)*

(What If... from page 1)

- Illinois' system is only 32% funded
- Oklahoma and Alaska switched from defined pension benefit to defined contribution (403B) due to lack of funding
- 38 states increased employee contributions (New York's new tiers)
- 40 states reduced benefits for future retirees.

Current retirees are deluding themselves if they believe that there is a 'grandfather clause' to protect them from the mayhem that might follow.

Cost of a Convention: The last constitutional convention cost New York taxpayers \$47 million. **When you plug that number into an Inflation/Historical Conversion/ Calculator, that \$47 million translates to approximately \$340 million today...a cumulative rate of inflation of 629%.** Each delegate receives an annual stipend (today \$79,500.000) plus pension benefits regardless of the duration of their work (In 1967, the convention lasted about 6 months.). Public officials serving as delegates get to 'double dip,' collecting both stipend and salary as well as pension credits

for each role. Then there are the expenses associated with facilities, staff, printing, etc. At the end of it all, there is the real possibility that the people will reject the convention's proposals...as the voters did in 1967.

Our concerns about the wisdom of opening a constitutional convention in no way diminishes the importance of the progressive ideas that will be put forth to justify having one. Our state constitution provides for a method of amendment outside of holding a convention. As stipulated, the state Senate and Assembly must pass a proposed amendment that is signed by the Governor in two successive years. That proposed amendment will then be submitted to the voters for approval in the next general election. This year, the people will get to vote on such an amendment: the proposal to take pensions away from office holders convicted of a crime. **This is a targeted surgical approach that addresses specific issues and does not put at risk other important provisions within our state's plan of government**

REMEMBER: On November 7th, Vote NO on the question of a Constitutional Convention. And I am sure that school districts and local governments would like to vie for a share of that \$340 million that the state will save!



May 16th General Meeting Election of Officers



April 23rd is the deadline for anyone interested in running for office to send a letter of intent to:

Mary Schlaikjer
78 Bay Avenue
Huntington, NY 11743

Nominations for officers will be accepted from the floor.
NYSUT Delegates & Alternates must submit letters of intent.
Term of office for all positions is 3 years.

Slate of Officers

Co-Presidents	Louisa Eiermann Michael Eiermann
1st Vice President	Marilyn Gutierrez
2nd Vice President	Simonne Harkavy
Treasurer	Fred Schafer
Co- Secretaries	Julia Arena Linda Brookshire
Three NYSUT Delegates:	Louisa Eiermann Michael Eiermann Marilyn Gutierrez

Alternates NYSUT Delegate must submit letters of intent to Mary Schlaikjer by April 23rd.

RETIREE COUNCIL 21
ANNUAL JUNE AWARDS LUNCHEON

Honoring Community Service Winner
Joseph Lachat
Presentation of Journalism & Website Awards

Guest Speaker: Stephen Kramer
NYSUT Member Benefits Legal Service Plan

Tuesday, June 13, 2017
Timber Point Country Club
398 Great River Road
Great River, New York 11739
631-581-0022

\$43.00 pp
12:00 noon – 3:30 pm

DOOR PRIZE & RAFFLES & 50/50

Menu

Seasonal Melon with Prosciutto
Garden Salad with House Dressing
Entrée: Choice of...

Marinated London Broil / Grilled Free Range Chicken / Filet of Sole Francaise / Vegetarian
Accompanied by vegetables & potatoes, rolls & butter

Dessert: Hot Apple Crisp a la mode accompanied by Coffee or Tea
Soda included; Cash Bar available

Reservation Form & Check (payable to Retiree Council 21) are to be forwarded to...

Jennifer Olsen
6 Shaker Hollow Road
East Setauket, New York 11733
631-751-4238

PLEASE PRINT:

Name _____ Phone # _____

Retiree Chapter _____

Guest Name _____

Entrée Choice: London Broil _____ Chicken _____ Fish _____ Vegetarian _____

Amount Enclosed: \$ _____

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Louisa Eiermann, Co-President
Mike Eiermann, Co-President
Simonne Harkavy, 1st VP
Marilyn Gutierrez, 2nd VP
Fred Schaefer, Treasurer
Julia Arena, Co-Secretary
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Contact/ us at:
(631) 473 - 4055

And visit us at:

ny.aft.org/rc21

Mike Eiermann - Webmaster

Forward changes in addresses/names to NYSUT and/or your local
President

New York State Constitutional Convention

Vote No on November 7, 2017



Go to NYSUT.org, then click on the **MAC - Member Action Center** icon and learn about issues by clicking on **ALL ACTIONS** line. Here you will see a listing and connection to all actions in which you may wish to participate. You can also join e-Activist which will keep you informed of issues NYSUT will be undertaking. Remain active as advocates for quality public education.

**Next General Meeting
May 16th - Elections
West Islip Public Library
10:15 AM**

NYSUT Retiree Council Political Advocacy Tool

Toll Free Numbers to Contact Your
Members of the U.S. House
& U.S. Senate

1 (866) 327-8670
1 (866) 338-1015
1 (866) 220-0044

White House Comment Lines:

1 (202) 456-1111
1(202) 456- 1414

Contact your State legislators
by using NYSUT's Website at
www.NYSUT.org

**Send a Fax to your
Member of Congress
The Governor
or State Legislator**

Go to: www.nysut.org

1. At top right of page click Resources.
2. On this page click: Legislative Action Center
3. On the left side click MAC - Member Action Center.
4. From this page you can choose actions you wish to pursue: sign up for MAC text alerts, find elected officials and more by scrolling down page.