

Port Authority Retirees Association, Inc.

P.O. Box 919 • Island Heights, NJ 08732-0919

SPECIAL NEWSLETTER APRIL 1990

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Need a Permanent COLA?

Comptroller Regan has once again submitted a proposed COLA bill and needs our support **now!**

Digest of proposed bill:

- Retirees would continue to receive their pension and, if entitled, current supplementation;
- Additionally, current and future retirees would receive an annual increase of one third of cost-of-living as measured by the Consumer Price Index (CPI);
- This initial COLA benefit would be based upon the first \$10,500 of pension allowance. Thereafter the \$10,500 cap would be adjusted annually by one third the increase in CPI;
- Individuals age 62 and retired over five years or retired 10 years regardless of age are covered as are disability pensioners retired for five years;
- The increase would be effective July 1, 1990; and
- The COLA would be automatic and permanent.

The Legislative Process

This bill—designated as S5495A and/or A8408A—(prefix S for Senate - A for Assembly) is assigned to the Civil Service and Pensions Committee in the Senate and the Governmental Employees Committee in the Assembly. After preliminary administrative steps, the deliberative process is concluded and

the committees vote on whether to report the bill to their respective floor for action. Bills not reported out of Committee, or not turned over to the Rules Committee for action, are considered “killed.” It is therefore imperative at this time that we all write the chairman and even individual committee members of the need for passage of this bill. For your ready reference we’ve listed below the chairman and individual members of each Committee, their political affiliation, the area they represent, and Albany addresses. (Suggestions for writing appear elsewhere in this Newsletter.)

After a bill is reported on favorably by a Committee, it is posted on the calendar of the appropriate house (Senate/Assembly) for action. The legislature may act only on bills which the committee reports out for action. This is the time when your individual legislatures and the legislative leaders should be contacted and made known of your interest in the bill.

A bill must pass both houses before it can be sent to the Governor for his consideration. This is the final act in the legislative process. If the Governor signs the bill it becomes law.

Be sure to make your feelings known to the Governor in timely fashion.

NEW YORK STATE SENATE

CIVIL SERVICE AND PENSIONS COMMITTEE

Senators

	Area
Caesar Trunzo (R-C), Chairman	Suffolk
Joseph L. Bruno (R-C)	Rensselaer
Hugh T. Farley (R-C)	Saratoga
Dean G. Skelos (R)	Nassau
Guy Vellella (R)	Bronx
Nicholas A. Spano (R-C)	Westchester
John B. Sheffer II (R-C)	Genesee
Martin Connor (D-L)	NYC
Marty Markowitz (D)	Kings
Martin M. Solomon (D)	Kings
Leonard P. Stavisky (D-L)	Queens
Anthony M. Masiello (D-L)	Erie

Senators can be contacted by writing to them in care of: New York State Senate • Albany, New York 12247.

NEW YORK STATE ASSEMBLY

GOVERNMENTAL EMPLOYEES COMMITTEE

Assemblypersons

	Area
Joseph R. Lentol (D), Chairman	Kings
Gary Proud (D-I)	Monroe
Eileen C. Dugan (D)	Kings
Thomas F. Catapano (D-L)	Kings
Helene Weinstein (D)	Kings
Samuel Colman (D)	Rockland
Peter J. Abbate Jr. (D)	Kings
Audrey Pheffer (D-L)	Queens
John G. O’Neil (R)	St. Lawrence
Neil Kelleher (R-C)	Wash.
Henry W. Barnett (R-C)	Westchester

Assemblypersons may be contacted by writing to them in care of: New York State Assembly • Albany, New York 12248.

Permanent COLA — When and How Much?

PARA's first Newsletter in May 1987 identified a long term objective—a permanent, automatic, indexed cost-of-living adjustment—and we've never lost sight of it. Through comparative studies of other state pension systems, working with a special task force of the Alliance of Public Retirees' Organizations, meetings with Comptroller Regan and work sessions with his staff, and by constant reference in our Newsletters the message has always been there. Initial reaction ranged from "It'll never happen." to something bordering on "Ho-Hum". Now, four years and many studies later, reports, formal proposals, and even specific legislation for this critical protection of pension purchasing power are in style. It is now a serious matter for retiree organizations, labor unions representing employees in the public and private sector, and officials seeking access to these pension funds for what they perceive as legitimate public goals.

Throughout this period of swings from sometimes bright promise to times of frustration, the learning process revealed some fundamentals. Among them: a growing awareness of pension funds as deferred compensation belonging to the employees and retirees for whom they were established; the right of pensioners to share in fund earnings at least to the extent that purchasing power of initial pensions are fully protected; recognition of the political process as it impacts this sensitive issue; and the need to introduce change in a gradual manner. This last point is extremely important and is amply demonstrated

in the multistep approach taken by many states whose pension systems now provide some form of permanent, automatic COLA. It seems quite clear that obtaining this fair and sorely

needed benefit is not accomplished by sweeping legislation that permanently binds pension funds to costs that might be viewed as "excessive" even if the numbers stand up to scrutiny. Rather it is achieved by legislation that recognizes and establishes the concept, even though the initial COLA amounts are modest. Once enacted into law, refinements can be

addressed in subsequent legislative steps.

Accordingly, PARA in cooperation with the Alliance of Public Retirees' Organizations support bill S5495A and/or A8408A. The proposed benefits are modest in recognition of the budget squeeze in Albany and, at the same time, to secure our real objective—a permanent, automatic, indexed COLA. After seventy years, wouldn't you say "it's about time"? If you agree, let the legislators in Albany hear from you.

Harold A. Milley
President

P.S. Copies of this Special Newsletter have been sent to selected active staff whose future pensions will be significantly impacted by the proposed legislation.

Suggestions for Writing

1. Elected officials are addressed as The Honorable _____ (name) _____.
2. Brief, handwritten letters describing the need in your own words are most effective.
3. If you reside in New York it's most important you write.
4. Identify the bill you're concerned about—S5495A and/or A8408A.
5. Write listed Senators and Assemblypersons **now** and ask family and friends to write too.
6. If you can't visit with your representatives, WRITE. The squeaky wheel gets the grease.
7. If we can't find time to write, why expect the legislator to find time for our needs?

We'll try to keep you posted on legislative progress.

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A special invitation to Port Authority staff.

APRIL 1990

Why join PARA?

It may appear somewhat unusual for active Port Authority staff members to join a retiree organization, even one comprised of former associates. However, closer examination may prompt a different conclusion.

Look at just a few of our accomplishments:

- Joined and have energetically participated in the Albany based Alliance of Public Retirees' Organizations, a federation of associations representing over 400,000 active and retired people, all of whom are members of New York pension systems. That 400,000 count means clout and gets attention from lawmakers and other key officials whose actions directly affect *your* pension benefits.
- Vigorously and successfully supported passage of legislation to increase pension supplements with adjustments skewed to favor hard pressed, long term retirees.
- Prepared comparative reports on benefits provided by state pension systems in New Jersey and California versus the New York State and Local Retirement Systems. These reports were instrumental in cultivating a climate for change in *your* retirement system.

- Working with the Alliance and Comptroller Regan we assisted in formulating a bill for a permanent, automatic, indexed cost-of-living adjustment for *active and retired* members of the New York State and Local Retirement Systems.

This COLA bill, the first of its kind in the 70 year history of this retirement system, has been reintroduced in the current Albany legislative process—designated as S5495A and A8408A—and details will be covered in a follow-up PARA Newsletter. This key objective, when enacted into law, will help *your* pension benefits keep pace with inflation.

The foregoing sample of PARA's activities clearly demonstrates important, common interests of active staff and retirees and we invite your participation. Simply complete and forward the attached application.

The job is too big and much too important to "let George do it". But together, why you ain't seen nothing yet!

Harold A. Milley, President

Port Authority Retirees Association, Inc.

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Please print or type:

CHECK (✓)

- Active
 Retired

Last Name First

Address Town State Zip

CHECK (✓):

- Enclosed is \$5.00 Annual Membership Dues (June 1990 through May 1991)
 Enclosed is \$_____. I would like to contribute as a sponsor.

Please submit checks only payable to: Port Authority Retirees Association, Inc.
Return form and check to the above address. Retain cancelled check for your receipt.