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**STAY TUNED**

The Alliance of Public Retiree Organizations of New York, representing 450,000 retirees, is developing a new approach to maintaining retiree purchasing power. Also, PARA is working on a plan to encourage and expand contact between New York residents and their elected representatives. We'll give you the details as they become available. Please be ready and willing to make your voice heard!

**United We Stand**

*Al Rubbert*

Last summer, I was asked if I would be interested in helping represent PARA on the Alliance of Public Retiree Organizations of New York. Obviously, I was delighted to accept owing to my proximity to Albany and to assist in any way I could to help push the legislative programs of the Alliance which are near and dear to us all. As previously reported in the Newsletter, the Alliance is comprised of thirty retiree organizations representing about 450,000 retirees. It was officially formalized in late 1991 and became operational on Jan 1, this year. Its purpose is to be the single voice of all New York State Public Retiree Organizations and bring to the attention of the Legislature, public officials and others the fair and just needs and concerns of the public retiree.

My first official exposure to the Alliance was on June 23 when Clay Peavey and I attended the Alliance Legislative Day meeting in Albany. The purpose of Alliance Legislative Day was to further legislative objectives by candid, face to face contact with as many legislators as possible. Visits were made by all Alliance representatives present to many elected officials including the Majority Leader and President Pro Tem of the New York State Senate. Carefully assembled packages of literature, press releases and large MOPP (Maintenance of Purchasing Power) stickers were left with each legislator visited. While a significant amount of effort went into the preparation of the packages requesting support for a COLA and three health benefit bills supported by the Alliance, it is difficult to evaluate the impact. The COLA bill had been "stuck" in the Assembly in the midst of election year politicking, the jattle over reapportionment and partisan and personality clashes. Also, the legislators were grappling with bills

already reported out of committee and were cramming to finish the 1992 session which finally adjourned on July 3. Regrettably none of the Alliance bills passed but the importance of the effort cannot be underestimated as the Alliance came out as a single group, speaking with one voice and I am convinced many legislators are aware it is a major force to be reckoned with in the future.

After the summer recess, the next meeting of the Alliance took place on September 23 and PARA was represented by Al Gonseth, Clay Peavey and me. The tempo of the meeting was very upbeat and the main focus was to be "ahead of the curve" and have our 1993 legislative program in place before the next session of the legislature convenes. Accordingly, all Alliance members were asked to propose any recommended changes to the earlier COLA and health bills sent to the last legislative session. These changes are currently being refined for insertion into final bills.

*(continued page 2)*

**MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL:** If the mailing label on your Newsletter envelope has the message \* DUES REMINDER \* PARA records do not show your dues payment for the fiscal year June 1992 - May 1993. If you overlooked it just complete the membership renewal on page 2 and mail it with your check. If you've already renewed your membership please ignore the reminder. We're backed up with a large number of new and renewed memberships which arrived in early fall.

**Port Authority Retirees Association, Inc.**  
P.O. Box 331, Ship Bottom, NJ 08008-0212

Please print or type:

Check

P.A. Employee

P.A. Retiree

_____	_____	_____	_____
last Name	First	State	Year
_____	_____	_____	_____
Address	Town	State	Zip

**CHECK** :

Enclosed is \$5.00 Annual Membership Dues (June 1992 through May 1993)

Enclosed is \$\_\_\_\_\_. I would like to contribute as a sponsor. Receipts in excess of annual dues are credited as sponsor contributions.

*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.

*(continued from page 1)*

PARA's position has been and is that the COLA bill should be something realistic and affordable so that it will not collapse of its own weight given the economic conditions and fiscal plight of New York State. It must be something the Comptroller and legislators can support. PARA is therefore recommending a modest COLA initially on the premise we must start somewhere and once the precedent is established, gradual implementation of further refinements. Specifics of the final proposed bill will be provided after approval by the Alliance.

PARA is also supporting the three Alliance health bills as outlined in the last Newsletter. These also might be subject to some refinement based on comments received and will be reported to you in final form once approved by the Alliance. Given the uncertainties of life, the economy and the legislative process, it is felt better to be ahead of the curve on this important issue as well.

A supplemental bill covering adjustments for retirees previously covered and adding others is also being readied and its final form will be reported once approved.

At the last Alliance meeting there was also extremely lively discussion concerning Comptroller Reagan's announcement last June that state and local governments will save some \$100 million dollars in retirement costs this year and he strongly urged the Governor and legislative leadership to use this surplus to fund a permanent supplementation for public retirees. This announcement, coupled with a recent State Supreme Court decision declaring unconstitutional a law that saved state and local governments from paying over a billion dollars into the retirement fund portend to make this a very interesting and hopefully fruitful year.

In his own gentle, but powerful way, Abe Lincoln probably said it best. The effort to obtain a COLA in the upcoming New York legislative program is going to require full commitment to "United We Stand..." It is incumbent on us all to help the Alliance help us and keep the pressure on our legislators to support our position on a permanent annual pension adjustment. The Alliance is doing its part; lets do ours!

*Doing Beats Stewing. - Anonymous*

**PARA PATTER**  
*Sal Miranda*

Ever since PARA became a functioning body, retirees, dependents and helpful friends have communicated with us asking for assistance and information regarding pension allowances, health benefits, social security or just plain old problems that confront people of all ages. We've done our best on a "one-on-one" basis to be helpful. But, over the years, so many of the questions seem to have been recurring ones that we've concluded many of us have the same problems. So we've decided to publish a general information column from time to time to be called PARA PATTER which we hope will touch on some of the questions of our readers. We encourage you to keep writing. We'll try our best to answer all of your "one-on-one". In the meantime, the first of our columns:

**QUESTION:** *Why don't I get supplemental pension benefits from Albany? Many of my P.A. friends do. I've been retired since October 1977 and nothing yet.*

**ANSWER:** According to New York State law supplemental pension allowances have been approved for pensioners who (1) retired before 1983 and (2) have attained age 62. Disability

retirees are exempted from the age requirement. Since you retired in 1977 your pension will be increased by 11.3% (calculated on zero option for the first \$10,500 of fixed pension) beginning the month following your 62nd birthday. Your long overdue pension adjustment is referred to as supplementation - "Supp" for short - and is altogether different from the COLA that PARA is fighting for and for all Port Authority retirees.

**QUESTION:** *I retired on March 17, 1973. For the last eighteen months I've had many medical bills. I'm concerned that my benefits will expire. Is there any way that I can find out how much I've used or have left?*

**ANSWER:** For all P.A. retirees, the initial Major Medical benefit at retirement would have been anywhere from \$7,500 to \$1,000,000. All depends on date retired, pay plan, etc. If you would look at your last explanation of health benefits (E.O.B.), the box on the left hand side, just above where the check is attached, you should see how much your lifetime benefit was and how much has been paid to date. That should help.

**QUESTION:** *As a recent retiree, I was over age 65 when I retired, I've had difficulty convincing Medicare that my employer's plan is no longer the primary payor for my benefits. Phone calls and letters to the address on the form have not helped. What can I do?*

**ANSWER:** Many have experienced your frustration. Across the form advising you that the employer plan is primary, write -- REVIEW MEDICARE IS PRIMARY -- return it to Medicare at the address given. But, USE POST OFFICE BOX 5211. It will work.

**QUESTION:** *As a retiree on a fixed income I'm finding it harder every year to make ends meet. Most of our savings are gone; our income now lasts for three weeks of the month instead of four. My Major Medical amount reduces every time the insurance company pays a claim and out-of-pocket expenses for Medicare premiums, co-insurance, deductibles, and prescriptions keep going up. How do others cope? What can I do?*

**ANSWER:** We don't know if we have complete answers to those problems for you. However, we do have some suggestions that have been successfully tried that could stretch both your insurance and out-of-pocket dollars:

1) Where possible, consider using generic drugs (much less expensive- and does the job. Talk to your doctor and pharmacist.)

2) Consider using a physician who accepts the Medicare fee schedule (could be a big saving).

3) If you should find yourself in need of surgery, check into whether the procedure can be performed on a same day out-patient basis. (Get a second opinion. Call the insurance provider and ask them if they will cover a second, or even third opinion).

4) Check to see whether there are alternatives to traditional surgery for some procedures (e.g. kidney stones, prostate problems, glaucoma) which could be cheaper and safer.

**QUESTION:** *My wife and I are both over 65 and receive monthly social security checks. She receives a smaller amount based on my earnings. Will she continue to receive her check if I die before her?*

**ANSWER:** If you predecease your spouse she will continue to receive a monthly social security check but will receive the higher amount you would have received.

While answers provided are factual they are general in nature and may not apply in every case. As an example the response on Social Security survivor's benefits can vary depending on the age of the surviving spouse. Therefore, we urge you to contact the proper source and be prepared to furnish complete details. Should you need additional help let us know.

**Sources of Help**

Port Authority Benefits.....	212-435-8078 (call collect)
Retirement System .....	518-474-7736
Prudential Insurance.....	800-772-4683
Social Security .....	800-772-1213

**AN EARLY LOOK AT '92 RESULTS**

The Retirement Systems earned an estimated 10.7% on investments during the April 1, 1991 - March 31, 1992 fiscal year. Stocks weighed in at 11.8% while the other half - bonds, mortgages, real estate and business investments - produced a 9.0% rate of return.

While the details still have to be worked out, it is clear that this was a good year -- one that shows the quality of our investment program and that continues our excellent earnings history. When averaged out over longer periods, our experience is as follows

Period	Earnings per year
3 Years	11.9%
5 Years	10.1%
10 Years	13.4%

## THE ESSENTIAL "IT": MAINTENANCE OF PURCHASING POWER

Clay Peavey

Historically, it has been known as a COLA - Cost of Living Adjustment that is. More recently, in an effort to re-energize it as a concept, retiree groups have taken to calling it MOPP - Maintenance of Purchasing Power. But whatever its name, with or without a catchy acronym, we New York State retirees certainly understand THAT WE DON'T HAVE "IT".

We see our fixed incomes being eroded by increased costs coming at us from every direction. "This isn't fair," we think. "Don't people understand that we were good 'public servants' who deserve better than a gradually diminishing sub-standard of living?"

Who are these people who we hope will understand? First and foremost, of course are Governor Cuomo, certain of his key advisors and members of the New York State Legislature. If they would provide some form of acceptable come adjustment we would be better prepared to face the realities of inflation. Given past performance, it is abundantly clear that they DO NOT understand our need - but let us return to them later.

How about the suppliers of food, household supplies, clothes, hardware, paper products, etc. Do they understand? Obviously not, if you have been to the supermarket lately. Or the "oil companies" - surely they should be sensitive to our fixed incomes when they establish the cost of gasoline, heating oil, natural gas and the other energy products we need. Wrong again - the crowd could "care less". Health care, your say! This is a major item in the budget of retirees. Diagnostic procedures frequently are billed in amounts which are staggering even when we pay only a percentage of the cost. Major or long term medical care can completely wipe us out.

Then, of course, there are officials of Federal and local government - they would certainly not want long term public employees to suffer through their retirement years. What does the record show? Some social security payments are now

taxed by the Federal government, and it is frequently suggested that all social security be subject to taxation. Maybe the Feds think we have "it" because they have "it." My county government has proposed a 1993 increase of almost 60% in county taxes. They must think I have "it"! No, we are not likely to get much relief from the public sector.

And on and on, the cost-of-existing goes up. Automobiles; appliances, tools and other "hard" goods; leisure activities; transportation and travel; you name it - wherever we look, things cost more than they "used to". And, unfortunately, the incomes of New York State retirees fall farther and farther behind.

When the P.A. Diary arrives in my mail box, I carefully look for my old friends and fellow-workers who have passed on. I find them listed there - died at age 87-79-84. Clearly most retirees of these ages "put in their papers" in the 1960's. I ask myself "what was it like for them, trying to make do on a pension based on their earning capacity in the economy of the 1960's?" Here's an old friend, let's call him John - worked with him for years early in my career. He went out in 1970 after 35 years service with a higher than average \$10,000 pension. That \$10,000 annual income would now buy the same amount of goods and services that \$2,900 bought in the year he retired. Not a pretty picture.

"But," says a New York State Legislator: "We've taken care of that - we gave him pension supplements." Indeed? In John's case supplements add about 32% to his annual income. This compares to a Consumer Price Index (CPI) increase between 1970 and 1992 of about 250 per cent. Further, he has lost forever the accumulated benefits that would have been his IF his pension was indexed to the CPI, and increases were automatically triggered as the cost-of-living inflated over the years. And as if these inequities were not enough, the tardy, meager supplements enacted ARE NOT a permanent part of the retirees' pension benefits. They must be

periodically renewed by the legislature and were in real danger of expiring in 1991. No, Mr. Legislator, you do not understand.

We all have our own version of John's story. In the case of long term retirees, the deprivation can be tragic. At the other end of the spectrum, those who retired after 1982 receive no supplements and their purchasing power has already eroded by as much as 40%.

Why no COLA, or MOPP or whatever you want to call it? We all know that Social Security payments are indexed to the CPI, as are the pensions of millions of retirees from Federal service. And, over half the retirement systems of other states provide AUTOMATIC cost-of-living adjustments, but, NOT NEW YORK. Not in the State that is generally viewed as "hopelessly liberal", with an array of human service programs benefitting a wide range of disadvantaged and

distressed individuals and groups.

Why not be fair to these retirees who have devoted much or all of their working lives to public service? It is, indeed, a mystery. Why should this group be asked to accept a disproportionate impact of State financial woes? Because we - the almost half a million public retirees in New York State - have not made our voices heard. We have been waiting for others "to understand" rather than making it clear that in the future we will vote in line with the health of our checking account. The upcoming legislative session is the time to be heard. We are responsible for letting Senators and members of the Assembly from our districts know that we need "it", want "it" and expect "it". Let the Governor and legislative leadership hear our voice. We worked for and deserve a life of dignity and modest comfort. Let's demand it!

### *On Unsuccessful Retiree Legislation...*

Why don't they pass it? There's not enough pressure on Assemblymen and Senators. They tell me they just don't hear enough about it from retirees....They only respond to pressure.

- Edward V. Regan



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## STATE REPORT

Oneonta Star  
Tuesday August 11, 1992

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### New York Loses Pension Funds Lawsuit

ALBANY (AP) - A state Supreme Court judge on Monday ruled that state lawmakers two years ago had illegally changed the way contributions are made into a public employee pension fund in order to save money...

Justice Hughes said a constitutional amendment that took effect in 1940 gave the comptroller authority to make any changes to the pension system. Two years ago, Regan denounced

the change as a fiscal gimmick.

"The legislation would divert the accumulated pension funds of public employees to meet a present fiscal crisis by reducing the contributions of public employers in order to avoid raising taxes or cutting other programs," Hughes wrote. "This is precisely the type of conduct the constitutional amendment was designed to prevent...."

## Straight from the Shoulder

1. Clete Bamber resigned from the PARA Board of Directors in June of this year. Clete joined the board at its first meeting in June 1987 and served in that capacity for five years contributing his time and energies to board responsibilities. He was particularly helpful during the formative years of the association offering insight and counsel in deliberations and frequently took on jobs where little glory was earned but much essential work was accomplished. The growth of PARA from a group of seven individuals to a large, vibrant organization is a reflection of the efforts of Clete Bamber.

Harriet Weber has resigned after serving PARA as typist for over three years. During the time she worked with us Harriet prepared correspondence to various legislators and other public officials, often did it on short notice, and always sent out a finished product that had class. Organizations like PARA require a variety of volunteered skills, often from different people, though none is more sorely needed than the person who prepares high quality correspondence. Harriet did that, and cheerfully. She made us look good!

The PARA Board of Directors acknowledges its debt of gratitude to Clete Bamber and to Harriet Weber for their contributions on behalf of this association and its members.

2. Al Gonseth, Clay Peavey, and Al Rubbert are welcomed as new members of the Board of Directors. While Al Gonseth and Clay Peavey have represented PARA in Albany, Al Rubbert recently joined the team. In addition to their new roles as members of the board, all three will be working in Albany where Al Gonseth serves as PARA representative to the Alliance of Public Retiree Organizations. All three - Al Gonseth, Clay Peavey, and Al Rubbert - are members of the APRO Legislative Committee.

3. PARA owes a special note of thanks to Carmen Marino, President, Port Authority Retired Police Association for the plug carried in their September '92 meeting announcement. His thoughtful comment prompted a large number of police retirees to submit PARA membership applications and that's great. All of

us face the same problems and all of us are needed if real changes are to be brought about. Help us help you!

On a related matter, we enjoyed having Carmen and Port Authority Retired Police Association Treasurer Tony Van Miert join us in Albany this past June at the Arthur Levitt Award luncheon sponsored by the Alliance of Public Retiree Organizations.

4. In response to questions received we're sharing with you some financial practices used by your association:

- \* PARA's fiscal year spans twelve months beginning June 1st of each year;
- \* Membership renewal notice is carried in the May Newsletter and dues are payable in June. Late renewal reminder is carried in the November/December Newsletter;
- \* Dues are credited as received and are always applied to the current fiscal year;
- \* Funds received in excess of annual dues are credited as a sponsor contribution. This practice appears in keeping with the intent of those generous people who submit them; and
- \* Receipts and membership cards are not used. Just keep your cancelled checks for your records and we'll maintain a current membership roster. This helps hold down expenses and makes it possible to keep the lowest membership dues of any comparable retiree organization.

5. **LAST CHANCE.** In the last Newsletter we reported a change of address. The new address is shown on the front page of this Newsletter and at the top of Page 2. The old address was continued for a transitional period and will be discontinued in the near future. While on the subject, keep us posted on your name and/or address changes. Also correct names and addresses should be reported to the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, Compensation and Benefits Division, Human Resources Department, 1 World Trade Center 61 East, New York NY 10048.

6. The Alliance of Public Retiree Organizations met in Albany on five occasions since May 1992 and PARA representatives were in attendance.

*- We're thinking of you.*