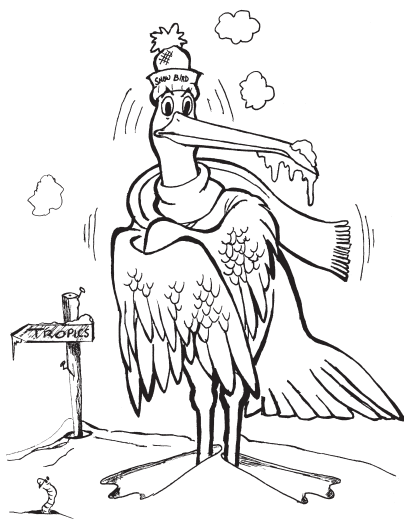


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***“Don’t forget Where You Put  
Your para-phernalia.”***



**A Message From Your President**

Over these past several months we have communicated with you on a number of occasions via snail mail and eBulletins (*for those of you who are **not** on that distribution list please consider signing up for these eBulletins*) regarding the recent New York State election which included a ballot question about holding a Constitutional Convention. This has been a particularly important item for all of us. The election was held on November 7. Please see the article on page 7 for our report on the outcome of the election on that question. As we had emphasized, this ballot question affects each and every one of us in the PA retiree community regardless of where we live. It also applies to all future retirees – our friends who are still working at the PA and all those (both active and retired) in other public sector organizations that are affiliated with the NYS pension system. We extend our sincere thanks to those of you who reached out to your family members, friends, and neighbors who are New York State voters to alert them about this issue. This was one of those items where each one of us, regardless of where we live, had an opportunity to participate in some way or other for the general benefit of all of us.

This was the second year that retirees have been invited to participate in the **“Remembrance through Renewal”** (RTR) program at the PA. We are grateful to those who were able to participate in one of the many volunteer opportunities in the local area during the month of September. This is another way for us to honor the memory of our colleagues who were lost in the September 11 attack on The World Trade Center. This program has been in effect for the past ten years at the PA and we are hopeful that the participation by the retiree community will continue to grow each year.

For those of you who are covered by the PA’s vision care benefit (NVA) we have been advised that the program has been expanded and will include a significant discount option for hearing aids as of January 1, 2018. For detailed information check with NVA or contact the PA benefits group **(212-435-2870)**.

The effort to complete the process of full E-ZPass reinstatement and the reimbursement of tolls (for those who have been granted reinstatement thus far) is continuing. We have been advised that the process of verifying the input from individuals and processing reimbursement payments should

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## President's Message - continued from page 1

be completed within the next few weeks. We are hopeful that the new leadership team at the PA will move to reinstate this benefit for all of us who were promised that these elements of our overall compensation program would continue to be in effect for the full duration of our retiree years. In the final analysis, we all rely on the good faith and commitment of the PA to fulfill its obligations to the career staff once we have completed our active service.

As we begin this year's holiday season, we extend our best wishes to all retirees and their family members at this special time of year. We are thankful for the continued support and for your comments and suggestions as we continue to address matters of concern and interest to our PARA members.

We sincerely hope that 2018 will be a year marked with good health and peace for all.

**Dave Gallagher, President**



**Congratulations to Cynthia Hadley-Bailey, one of our newest PARA Board Members, who was honored by the NY NJ Port Authority Retired Detectives Association (PARDA) at its Annual Awards Dinner on Thursday, November 2, 2017.**

# Board Highlights



Rich Hellenbrecht, Donna Tucker, Dave Gallagher, Holly Blausler, John Fitzpatrick, Liz DeLaura, Bob Isaacs, Rita DuBrow, George Jensen, Rae Ann Hoffmann, Al Graser, Steve Borrelli, Arnold Karvasarsky, Peter Rinaldi, Ken Philmus, Cynthia Hadley-Bailey, Enoch Lipson, Dick Lee, Jerri Raczynski, Frank DiMola (Missing were: Maria Malone-Hodges, Mike Morrow, Herb Somerwitz and Frank Lombardi)

The second Quarterly Meeting of the Board of Directors (Board) was held on April 18, 2017, at 10:03 am in the Times Square Hall at the Port Authority Bus Terminal. Special guest, Bob Boyle, who served as Port Authority Executive Director from 1997 – 2000 and has been a PARA member for a number of years, spoke to the Board. He shared his perspective and insights with the Board regarding the current Port Authority “leadership environment”. This was covered in detail in the Spring Newsletter. Reports of the Committees were given. Treasurer Isaacs reported that Wells Fargo had lost several checks that had been deposited. He was able to identify all of them and Wells Fargo subsequently credited all the checks. We learned that New Jersey State Senator Loretta Weinberg may be interested in meeting with the PARA Board in the future. No action has been taken on this as yet. Director Malone-Hodges had completed a one-page flyer for distribution at various PA retirement seminars and other venues in an effort to recruit new members. President Gallagher reported that all unions who grieved the elimination of their E-ZPass benefits have gotten them back. Only the IUOE, which did not grieve it,

and the non-represented employees remain without their E-ZPass benefit. A motion was made and approved to extend the following Board Members for 3-year terms: D. Gallagher, F. Lombardi, R. A. Hoffmann, H. Blausler, E. Lipson, P. Rinaldi, S. Borrelli and J. Fitzpatrick. Director Blausler brought a motion, which was approved, to add the following nominees to the Board as candidates for approval in July: Frank DiMola, Cynthia Hadley-Bailey and Donna Tucker.

The Annual Meeting and the third Quarterly Meeting were held on July 27 at the Port Authority Bus Terminal. At the Annual Meeting President Gallagher noted that Bridgegate is now behind us and reiterated the status of E-ZPass benefits. It was suggested that the E-ZPass issue be pursued in the months ahead with the new PA leadership. He also mentioned that the Port Authority Board of Commissioners has six new members. In addition, the extension of the 8 existing PARA Board Members up for renewal was approved and the Board approved the

following 3 new members for 4-year terms: Frank DiMola, Cynthia Hadley-Bailey and Donna Tucker.

There were two guest speakers at the third Quarterly Meeting. Joe Monte, from HR, introduced Siobhan Buchta, who is a Port Authority Leadership Fellow (a program similar to the former Management Trainee Program).

Ms. Buchta spoke about a volunteer program called Remembrance Through Renewal, now in its 10th year, in which Port Authority employees and retirees work on various public



**Siobhan Buchta and Joe Monte**

service projects for a half-day to honor those lost on September 11 and in the 1993 attacks on The World Trade Center. The program is run by the PA Leadership and Operations Fellows. The program began

***Board Highlights - continued page 4***

## **Board Highlights** - continued from page 3

working with three organizations and now there are 25 organizations involved. They expected between 300 and 400 volunteers this year. Reports of the Committees were given. A discussion ensued about increasing PARA's membership and making it more convenient to pay dues such as through the use of PayPal. This will be looked into. President Gallagher thanked Jack Savage, who is leaving PARA, for his exemplary service over the years. Gallagher reported that NJ Legislative issues are quiet at this time. President Gallagher reported that he was contacted by Caren Turner, one of the six new PA Commissioners. They had a lengthy conversation which hopefully fostered the start of a good relationship with the Board. It appears that the chief executive search, which was unsuccessful, is over. It is unclear how things will progress from this point. It was also reported that the IUOE now has a settled contract

after seven years of operating without one. Hopefully settlements with the other unions will follow.

A proposal to hold a Constitutional Convention in New York State is on the November 7, 2017 ballot. If approved, all 204 delegates in New York may bring provisions that are currently protected by the NY State Constitution up for discussion and/or possible change. The provision that guarantees the pension system is one of them and is of serious concern to PARA. As a result, PARA is encouraging our New York constituents to vote NO and to encourage friends, family members and other acquaintances to vote no as well.

**Jerri Raczynski**

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## **PARA Membership and Dues**

The Port Authority Retirees Association, Inc. (PARA) is a not-for-profit corporation that promotes the welfare of PA retirees by fostering and encouraging a united effort to maintain and improve legislation, primarily as it affects the pensions of the New York State Retirement System members. The PARA Board is an all-volunteer body that contributes its knowledge and time to advocate on behalf of PA retirees.

Recruiting new members for PARA is becoming increasingly more challenging. Privacy issues within the Port Authority make it difficult for our Membership Committee to contact current retirees. Therefore, we encourage all PARA members who still have friends and associates, either currently still working at the Port Authority, or recently retired, to help us recruit new members.

Enclosed you will find a Dues Remittance envelope for your convenience in submitting your 2018 Annual Dues. The \$10.00 fee covers the period from January 1, 2018 through December 31, 2018. Copies of the Dues Remittance form can also be found on our website at [paranynj.org](http://paranynj.org).

## **9/11 Tribute Museum**

All retirees: we would like to welcome you to the new Tribute World Trade Center Museum in Spring of 2018

As you may recall we visited Tribute before at their old location twice on Liberty St. This new location on Greenwich St. is 3-to-4 times larger than the original location. With this space they were able to expand their exhibits, include new technology and create a larger meeting area (hence the title is now Museum instead of Center, as it was known before).

The new location offers all retirees knowledge of the 9/11 event, and the recovery and rescue efforts for rebuilding lower Manhattan. The museum offers a "Person-to-Person" experience for those who want to understand the events from someone who experienced them. Retirees will learn of the service that arose after the attacks and how that legacy is honored through acts of volunteerism and kindness in their communities.

We will extend this invitation to any retiree and their significant other for an event in April or May of 2018. As before, we will send members a notice of the exact date, and a date by which we'd like a reply so we can plan the event.

Many retirees decided to become docents after their visit. It's a wonderful opportunity to meet other retirees, see how expertly 9/11 is handled, and possibly join the ranks of those other retirees who volunteer at the Museum.

More to come...

# Know Your Taxpayer Bill of Rights

**Every taxpayer has a set of fundamental rights and the IRS has an obligation to protect them. Know these rights when interacting with the IRS. Below are the descriptions of each right:**

- 1. The Right to Be Informed.** Taxpayers have the right to know what to do in order to comply with the tax laws. They are entitled to clear explanations of the laws and IRS procedures on all tax forms, instructions, publications, notices and correspondence. They have the right to know about IRS decisions affecting their accounts and receive clear explanations of the outcomes.
- 2. The Right to Quality Service.** Taxpayers have the right to receive prompt, courteous and professional assistance in their interactions with the IRS. They also have the right to be spoken to in a way they can easily understand, to receive clear and easily understandable communications from the IRS, and to speak to a supervisor about inadequate service.
- 3. The Right to Pay No More Than the Correct Amount of Tax.** Taxpayers have the right to pay only the amount of tax legally due, including interest and penalties and to have the IRS apply all tax payments properly.
- 4. The Right to Challenge the IRS's Position and Be Heard.** Taxpayers have the right to raise objections and provide additional documentation in response to formal IRS actions or proposed actions. They also have the right to expect the IRS to consider their timely objections promptly and fairly and to receive a response if the IRS does not agree with their position.
- 5. The Right to Appeal an IRS Decision in an Independent Forum.** Taxpayers are entitled to a fair and impartial administrative appeal of most IRS decisions, including many penalties and have the right to receive a written response regarding the Office of Appeals' decision. Taxpayers generally have the right to take their cases to court.
- 6. The Right to Finality.** Taxpayers have the right to know the maximum amount of time they have to challenge an IRS position as well as the amount of time the IRS has to audit a particular tax year or collect a tax debt. Taxpayers have the right to know when the IRS has finished an audit.
- 7. The Right to Privacy.** Taxpayers have the right to expect that any IRS inquiry, audit or enforcement action will comply with the law and be no more intrusive than necessary, and will respect all due process rights, including search and seizure protections and will provide, where applicable, a collection due process hearing.
- 8. The Right to Confidentiality.** Taxpayers have the right to expect that any information they provide to the IRS will not be disclosed unless authorized by the taxpayer or by law. Taxpayers have the right to expect appropriate action will be taken against employees, return preparers, and others who wrongfully use or disclose taxpayer return information.
- 9. The Right to Retain Representation.** Taxpayers have the right to retain an authorized representative of their choice to represent them in their dealings with the IRS. Taxpayers have the right to seek assistance from a Low Income Taxpayer Clinic if they cannot afford representation.
- 10. The Right to a Fair and Just Tax System.** Taxpayers have the right to expect the tax system to consider facts and circumstances that might affect their underlying liabilities, ability to pay, or ability to provide information timely. Taxpayers have the right to receive assistance from the Taxpayer Advocate Service if they are experiencing financial difficulty or if the IRS has not resolved their tax issues properly and timely through its normal channels.

**Avoid scams. The IRS will never initiate contacting you using social media, by telephone (this is a very big scam), or text message. First contact generally comes in the mail. Those wondering if they owe money to the IRS can view their tax account information at IRS.gov to find out.**

# Medicare Issuing New ID Cards beginning in 2018

In order to discourage identity theft, Medicare is preparing to stop using Social Security numbers for identification next year and will send new cards to patients with Medicare ID numbers. The 2015 law, the Medicare Access and CHIP Reauthorization Act, requires the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) to remove Social Security numbers from Medicare cards by April 2019. The agency plans to begin mailing the new cards with Medicare Beneficiary Identifiers (MBIs) in April 2018. CMS plans a “wide-scale outreach” to let beneficiaries know that they need to bring their new Medicare cards when they get care and how to get MBIs if they lose their cards.

Until the new Medicare ID Cards are issued, you are urged not to carry your current Medicare card unless you are on your way to a health care appointment. Instead, make a copy and black out all but the last four digits.

## Too Little Or Too Much Going To The IRS From Your Pension?

Is your federal tax (IRS) withholding information for your NYS and Local Retirement System (NYS&LRS) up-to-date?

If like some of us, you haven't looked at it in several years, and you realize you should change the amount of federal tax (i.e., exemptions, marital status, or specific amounts) you want withheld from your pension, here is what you can do.

Go to [www.paranyj.org](http://www.paranyj.org), then go to the link at the top for “Forms.”

Under “Forms” you will see an amazing list, thanks to our webmaster Joe SanSevero, including a separate listing for NYS&LRS, where you will see a link to “NYS&LRS Tax Forms.”

## PARA Reaches Out . . .

At its quarterly meeting in October, the PARA Board approved a donation of \$1000 to support the Puerto Rico and Caribbean Island relief effort. This donation follows the invitation that PARA received from the Port Authority asking retirees with certain skills to join the PA's disaster relief team. There were some 70 PA staff members who traveled to the island to help in the work to reactivate the San Juan airport and the Port of San Juan in the aftermath of hurricane Maria. Those who are on our eBulletin distribution list were able to learn about this in the short turnaround time frame that was available. We are grateful to all those retirees and active staff who participated in this relief effort. The PARA Board felt that this donation on behalf of the PARA organization dovetailed with the PA's staffing effort for this crisis. The donation was sent to GlobalGiving - the same organization that was recommended to the PA employees for those who wished to make an individual donation.

## Live and Let Live Under One G-O-D, authored by Devidas Tahiliani, P.E./ NY & NJ

Dev Tahiliani, a former Senior Project Manager from the Tunnels & Bridges Department, has written a book called “LIVE AND LET LIVE UNDER ONE G-O-D (Generator-Operator-Destroyer), which teaches young people about humanity and spirituality (Universal Religion). After the WTC attack on September 11, Dev became more determined to do something about the religious fights or the fights between the haves (rich) and the have nots (poor). The book explores how we can each follow our own path and share our faith with others without hatred, scorn, or violence, and accept other paths as equally valid to our own. It is good to have some kind of faith, but we must follow it with a reason. The power of our inner spirituality is called Humanism. You can find LIVE AND LET LIVE UNDER ONE G-O-D (Generator – Operator – Destroyer) online at Rose Dog Books.

# The NYS Constitutional Convention Referendum Was Defeated!

Your PARA Board is pleased to report that the referendum -- whether or not to hold a New York State (NYS) Constitutional Convention (ConCon) -- **was defeated at the polls on Tuesday, November 7, 2017!**

This is the **best possible news** we could give you. After many weeks of electronic and paper communications we sent to our members, the pages of information, links, Q & A's and videos posted on PARA's website ([www.paranyj.org](http://www.paranyj.org)), and **your participation** in getting the word out to all the people you know who are NYS voters, we can finally exhale and know that our NYS earned pension is protected.

Your NYS earned pension is secure and remains protected under the NYS Constitution, specifically, under Article 5, Section 7. This section of law is often referred to as the "non-impairment clause," and means that the benefit a member is entitled to may never be diminished. Absent a constitutional convention or amendment, any reductions in benefits which could be legislatively enacted would apply only to new members of the System.

The next referendum (whether or not to hold a constitutional convention) surfaces in another twenty years, so we have some breathing room.

Meanwhile, here is an important fact you should know about the New York State and Local Retirement System (NYSLRS), composed of approximately 1.1 million members:

- The average pension for **ALL** of those in the Employees' Retirement System (95% of NYSLRS members) is slightly more than \$23,000 per year. We think this is important to know since numbers far larger than that have been reported in the media, at times encouraged by anti-public-pension interests.

Back to acknowledging the victory of the "NO" vote to hold a NYS Constitutional Convention.

**Thank you**, one and all, for everything you did to help get the word out: sharing copies of your hard copy letters, forwarding your eBulletins, posting information on Facebook, etc., and emailing and talking to your friends, family and neighbors who are NYS voters. It was a major group effort and a substantial success for PARA.

Thank you for your continuing support of PARA.

Your PARA Board

## ***NYS Department of Motor Vehicles***

The NYS Department of Motor Vehicles will no longer mail registration renewal reminders. They claim this reduction in paper and postage conserves valuable resources and provides a more convenient service to its customers. You can sign up for their Electronic Reminder program at: <https://process.dmv.ny.gov/enotification/>.



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## *...look inside*

*For your latest issue of para-phernalia!*

### **Still Not Signed Up To Receive PARA's eBulletins?**

As a PARA member, you know that we send you a printed newsletter twice a year. We know it is well worth the time and money PARA invests in it, and we know that our members appreciate it as an important member benefit.

Most of you use emails to communicate with family and friends. If you are missing out on the eBulletins that PARA sends when news breaks, then you aren't really getting your full advantage of membership. Here is how to sign up: <http://paranynj.org/signup.htm> . Don't wait, do it now.

### **How Often Do You Visit PARA's Website?**

One of the most important benefits that PARA provides its members is information. PARA's website, [www.paranynj.org](http://www.paranynj.org) , is updated a minimum of once a week, usually more often than that.

This is a very crucial source of information for our members, including benefits numbers and forms, links to PARA eBulletins and PA News, In Memoriam listings, Retirement Flyers, Current Events for members, and lots more. When you go to the PARA website, be sure to **refresh your link** (also known as reloading the page) to be sure that you have the latest posted information. Don't miss out on one of your PARA benefits!

### ***Did You Know?***

Port Authority employees and retirees can take advantage of hundreds of discounts at stores, theaters, theme parks, and more through Working Advantage, the PA's Employee Discount Program partner. Visit [www.workingadvantage.com](http://www.workingadvantage.com) and use the PA Member ID number – 405042634.

