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**Membership Renewal:** Annual membership renewal for June 1993 through May 1994 is due. Just use the remittance slip at the top of Page 2. Legislation for Maintenance of Purchasing Power (MOPP) has been submitted along with bills to expand retiree health benefits. Too, the existing pension supplementation runs out August 31st of this year. Your help and action are needed.

**IMPORTANT LEGISLATION INFORMATION**

*Al Gonseth*

Port Authority employees who retired in 1982 or before and are 62 or older receive an additional amount of money in their monthly pension allowance which is called a "pension supplement". The pension supplement law is renewed every two years by the New York State Legislature. The current pension supplement runs out on August 31 of this year. However, two bills have been proposed that will ensure the continuation of the pension supplement. They are: S-2742 sponsored by Senator Caesar Trunzo and A-5887 sponsored by Assembly Member Helene Weinstein. (Note: see table CPI vs. Supplement on page 3.)

PARA believes that it is very important to add more years to the current supplemental program and, with our APRO colleagues (400,000 strong), we are urging that public employees who retired from 1983 through 1987 also receive a pension supplementation. Also, rather than continuing to rely on bi-annual "supplement" adjustments it is important to initiate an automatic annual adjustment. This MAINTENANCE OF PURCHASING POWER (MOPP) - a new name for a cost - of - living allowance or COLA - has been drafted into a bill that would provide automatic, permanent pension adjustments to help protect the retiree from increases in the rate of inflation. This currently unnumbered bill is being introduced by Senator Michael Nozzolio and Assembly Member Jack McEneny. However, legislators will recognize it by the name "MOPP".

The MOPP bill provides:

1. pension increases after the CPI has increased 10% from date of retirement;
2. annual pension increases of 90% of CPI to a maximum annual adjustment of 5%;
3. initial annual retirement allowances capped at \$20,000. Thereafter the cap would be indexed to the CPI;
4. annual pension increases calculated upon base pension plus any supplemental benefits received; and
5. a "sunset" provision which would allow the

legislature to monitor and adjust the bill, if necessary, after five years.

A package of health benefit bills - S-4379/A-782; S-4381/A-940 and S-4380/A-1166 - all sponsored by Senator Velella and Assembly Member Mayersohn would:

- allow a retiree who retired before January 1, 1989 to request that unused sick leave credit be used to pay health insurance premiums for a surviving spouse. (Most N.Y. State employees who retired after January 1, 1989 are already eligible for this benefit.);
- require government employers participating in the State Employees Health Insurance Plan to provide the same level of health insurance benefits for retirees as they provide for active employees; and
- require public employers participating in other health insurance plans to provide the same level of health insurance benefits for retirees as they provide for active employees as well as to provide credit for Medicare premium charges paid for by retirees and their dependents.

Mandating a "level playing field" respecting employer contributions for retirees and employees alike would avoid the potential for employers arbitrarily reducing retiree health insurance benefits. Too, since Medicare is designated as the primary provider of health care for most retired public employees, employer costs are reduced. This saving should be returned to the retiree who pays the bill for Medicare premiums out of a constantly diminishing purchasing power. Most retirees from public service in New York already enjoy this benefit.

Please write, call or visit your local legislators and tell them how you and your family are being personally affected by inflation and the loss of adequate health care coverage. Such an effort is important to you and your fellow retirees to make sure that you receive the financial assistance you deserve.

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 \_\_\_\_\_ Home Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_ Year \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_ Town \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

CHECK :

- Enclosed is \$5.00 Annual Membership Dues (June 1993 through May 1994)  
 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.

## Are You Listening?

Clay Peavey

Since its inception, this newsletter has carried tens-of-thousands of words about the need for "COLAs", i.e. changes in individual pension benefits based on annual changes in the cost of living. More recently we have substituted the concept of MOPP - Maintenance of Purchasing Power - based on exactly the same principle. We have written about the great need, how unfairly retirees are treated by New York State and how Federal retirees receive annual COLAs, as do retired employees of a majority of other states.

If you have been listening and want to help yourself and your fellow retirees, now is the time for action. You can influence the political process necessary to finally achieve fair treatment for retired Port Authority employees as well as for all other retired public employees in New York State.

### The Need

Let's review again the need!

1. Many "old timers", like the one who may have taught you your first PA job, are hurting. They retired when salaries were low and although they receive pension supplements, their monthly cash-in-hand falls short of their present cost-of-living. You may be one of these retirees - read on and get ready to help yourself!

2. Those who retired in the 70's and 80's may have had pensions calculated from a higher salary base, but their purchasing power has similarly been eroded by inflated costs for food, housing, medical care, transportation and taxes. An individual who retired in 1975 has already seen the CPI rise by 159% and his/her purchasing power will decline further each year. If this describes you, join your fellow retirees in an effort to stop the erosion of your standard of living.

3. Those who retired after 1983 receive no supplements and their buying power is rapidly diminishing. If you are in this group your capacity to purchase goods and services has already declined - for some more than 39%. It will only get worse with time unless you step up and make your voice heard now.

### How You Can Help

The political process which can bring our legislative program into reality requires the introduction of bills in both the State Senate and Assembly. The proposed legislation, for which sponsors have already been obtained, will then be referred to Senator Trunzo's Civil Service and Pensions Committee in the Senate, and Assembly Member Weinstein's Governmental

Employees Committee in the Assembly. If, (and its a big if), these Committees act favorably, the members of each house will have an opportunity to debate the legislation on the floor and to vote for or against.

Favorable Committee action is difficult to achieve. Individual Chairpersons have enormous power, and their decisions are, of course, strongly influenced by the desires of the leadership of each House. They also listen to the viewpoints and needs not only of Committee members, but also other members of the legislature like your local State Senator and Assembly Member. In the past, numerous COLA bills have died in Committee - the Chairs were simply unconvinced that the bills should be reported favorably to the full Senate and Assembly.

Finally, assuming bills are reported out and do pass in each House, and that differences are reconciled, the Governor's signature is required to make the legislation law. In the past, Governor Cuomo has been extremely reluctant to express any support for COLA legislation and retirees with varying degrees of need have been left in the lurch.

But it need not stay that way! Together we can change the political gridlock that has made retirees bear the brunt of budget constraints. We can overcome the callous apathy and opposition of "key players" only if we take united action and make them aware that it is politically dangerous for them to continue to ignore the needs of retirees. And we must all get off our duffs and let them know it.

We are told that calls and letters to legislators are tabulated, and that in the past, only a small fraction of the 400,000 retired public employees in the State have been heard from. In the absence of your support for improved pension benefits, individual legislators and the leadership have assumed they run no risk in placing their priorities elsewhere.

This is where you come in! Let your voice be heard! Begin by writing or calling your representative in both the State Senate and Assembly. Inform him or her of your need for legislation that will protect your purchasing power. Urge your representatives to inform their leadership and appropriate Committee Chairs of their support for pension benefits which respond to changes in the cost-of-living. Say it in your own words, but say it loud and clear. And be assured that your small voice matters; together we can make a difference.

**VISIT! WRITE! CALL! TELEGRAPH! FAX!**

# Are You Listening?

Al Rubbert

As previously reported your PARA representatives have been working closely with other retiree groups in Albany to advance programs that are critically important to current and future retirees. And while this coordinated action was underway a parallel effort was launched to reach all Port Authority retirees residing in New York to obtain their participation and support. With the cooperation of fellow retirees a "calling list" or "telephone tree" including nearly 1200 retirees residing in New York has been established. The "calling list" is designed to be put in motion on short notice to lend support to important legislation and will be used for the first time during this legislative session.

The focus of the "calling list" is the New York resident retiree as it is the legislators in Albany who have the power to pass our MOPP bill. As constituents, all New York resident retirees will be contacted and asked to contact their State Senator and Assembly Member and request their backing.

Here's the way the "calling tree" will work: Volunteer "calling captains", who have already been contacted in their respective telephone area locales, have been furnished a list of Port Authority retirees who live nearby. The captains will call each person on their list and request they contact their local elected representatives. It is imperative that every New York resident contact their respective legislators as requested by the captains. Visits, letters, and calls in support of appropriate bills will give added emphasis to PARA's efforts and bring home to the elected representatives the clear message that if they want your vote they must support sought after legislation.

One added important note! The ground-work is laid and the rewards are ahead. We just need everyone's help to help ourselves. Each of us has seen our pension purchasing power erode over the years and the theme of our legislation is Maintenance of Purchasing Power (MOPP). We want what we've already earned - nothing more. We all feel we should live our retirement years in dignity and deserve at least that.

Remember the call from the volunteer "calling captains" could be one of the most important you will ever get. When you get it be sure to act!

*Are you listening?*

## RISE IN CONSUMER PRICE INDEX vs. CURRENT PENSION SUPPLEMENT FOR THIRTY YEARS 1991-1962

Retirement Year	Rise in CPI Since Retirement	Current Pension Supplement	Retirement Year	Rise in CPI Since Retirement	Current Pension Supplement
1991	2.3	0	1976	144.9	13.4
1990	6.7	0	1975	159.0	15.5
1989	12.4	0	1974	182.7	18.9
1988	17.8	0	1973	213.7	23.4
1987	22.6	0	1972	233.2	26.7
1986	27.1	0	1971	244.2	29.0
1985	29.6	0	1970	259.0	31.8
1984	34.2	0	1969	280.2	39.8
1983	39.9	0	1968	300.7	51.6
1982	44.4	1.5	1967	317.5	66.2
1981	53.3	2.4	1966	329.5	80.7
1980	69.2	4.1	1965	341.8	96.4
1979	92.0	6.6	1964	349.4	111.4
1978	113.7	9.1	1963	355.3	126.3
1977	130.7	11.3	1962	360.8	144.2

### NOTES:

1. Retirees since 1983 receive no pension supplement yet comprise more than half the retiree population.
  2. Supplements are usually granted five to ten years following retirement though some retirees have waited more than twenty years.
  3. Supplements are meager when compared with the rise in CPI particularly for those retiring 1970-1982
  4. All supplements from 1969 and earlier, even though skewed to favor longer term retirees, still have a substantial gap when compared to the rise in CPI. All retirees from 1969 and earlier comprise less than 4% of retiree population.
  5. Cost of retiree supplements to employers declines by five million dollars each year.
- QUESTION: Can you think of any better reasons for an automatic, indexed MOPP/COLA?

## How to Contact Your Legislators...

The best way to reach legislators is to visit them in their home office in your district.

If you don't know your legislators (members of the New York State Senate and Assembly) or where their offices are located, just call your County Board of Elections for this information.

If you can't visit your representative in person, the next best thing to do is to write them using these suggestions:

1. Send a clearly handwritten or typed letter and print your name and address under your signature.
2. Use your own words instead of a

"canned" letter.

3. Avoid harsh language or threats. They'll turn the reader off.
4. Be clear about your position and say how it would affect you.
5. Ask for a reply from the legislator.
6. Send a similar letter addressed "To The Editor" to your local paper.

### HERE'S WHO AND WHERE TO WRITE "KEY PLAYERS":

The Honorable Mario M. Cuomo  
NY State Executive Chamber, Albany, NY 12224  
SENATE:  
The Honorable Ralph J. Marino, Majority Leader  
The Honorable Manfred Ohrenstein,  
Minority Leader  
The Honorable Caesar Trunzo, Chairman,

Civil Service and Pensions Committee

#### All Are At:

New York State Senate  
Legislative Office Building, Albany, NY 12247

#### ASSEMBLY:

The Honorable Saul Weprin, Speaker  
The Honorable Clarence D. Rappleyea, Jr.,  
Minority Leader  
The Honorable Helene Weinstein,  
Chair, Governmental Employees Committee

#### All Are At:

New York State Assembly  
Legislative Office Building, Albany, NY 12248  
NOTE: If your State Senator is: Trunzo, Bruno, Farley, Skelos, Velella, Spano, Sheffer, Connor, Markowitz, Solomon, Stavisky, or Santiago; or your Assembly Member is: Weinstein, Seminerio, Dugan, Abbate, Pheffer, Glick, Vitaliano, Aubry, McEneny, Perry, Conte or Townsend, their vote is very important. They all serve on the two committees that will consider retiree legislation.

# WATCH WASHINGTON

Sal Miranda

We agree that something must be done about the general health of the economy, reducing the deficit, which has an effect on the economy itself, and the reform of health care.

As you know, there are over 32 million people without health care and millions more inadequately covered. This is unacceptable and most seniors appear to support the concept of adjusting contributions to help resolve our economic/social ills. And we very much want to do our part. The question becomes, are seniors being asked to do more than their share?

Hits on social security and medicare again seem to be in season. As part of President Clinton's national economic blueprint, Congress voted to raise federal income taxes so that those who now pay taxes on up to 50% of Social Security benefits would pay them on up to 85%.

The House approved the president's proposal but the Senate voted to modify the House passed version. The Senate change would establish a two tier system of taxing Social Security. Couples with taxable incomes of \$32,000 to \$40,000 and individuals with taxable income between \$25,000 and \$32,000 would continue to pay their tax at the 50% level. Those over these amounts would pay taxes on up to 85% of their benefits.

The blueprint would affect those 65 and over in other ways. It would reduce medicare payments to doctors and hospitals which could cause some doctors to discriminate against older Americans without regard to income.

In addition, for at least the next five years, President Clinton proposes to add to the Medicare Part B premium,

beyond the scheduled increases now mandated by law.

The other leg of President Clinton's proposal, Health Care Reform, has not yet been reported on. However, the pot seems to be boiling. In an exclusive interview carried in the AARP Bulletin, Ira Magaziner, who is second in command of the president's National Health Care Reform Task Force, said that the proposal would provide "serious" prescription drug help to older Americans and at least the start of long term health care. If the proposal is successful it can do much to alleviate senior citizens' medical/economic problems. However, if taxes will have to be increased to pay for these benefits, the question becomes, what form will they take? Many still speculate there will be a value-added-tax - a regressive form of sales tax - and if that is so, the seniors seem to be in for it again.

In the meantime, the tax increase proposed on Social Security seems to have caused the most controversy among seniors. Even with modifications proposed by the Senate, over 4,000,000 senior citizens will find themselves in the grossly unfair position of making more than their share of sacrifice. In addition to paying all the taxes paid by others, an individual with a taxable income of \$30,000 above his social security of \$10,000 would pay an extra \$714 a year and a couple with taxable income of \$48,000 above social security of \$12,000 would pay \$1,176 extra.

It almost seems as though they're planning a shearing party for those of us who haven't had our mortgages foreclosed yet. If you feel that way too, write or call your Senator and Representative in the House.

## Straight From the Shoulder

1. Our sincere thanks to the large number of PARA members residing in New York who readily agreed to help make our first attempt at a phone network click. The response was enthusiastic and in some areas there were more volunteers than needed.

The size of the undertaking - developing a suitable plan to reach almost 1200 retirees throughout New York State, contracting for listed phone numbers, calling potential volunteers, sorting retirees into "local call batches", assigning "local call batches" to volunteers while trying not to burden anyone, and preparing a special mailing - gave us some trepidation. But the need to stimulate contact between retirees and their representatives seemed to call for some means of supplementing the Newsletter and judging from the welcomed and eager response from phone volunteers we've hit on something. You're a great group!

2. While on the subject of phones you've no doubt already noticed a space for your home phone number on the membership renewal slip. If you choose to provide that information it will be included in PARA's data base. This should greatly simplify and reduce the cost of updating a phone network. On this note, if any reader has a suggestion on how the network can be improved, please let us know.

### 3. Sources of Help:

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

- We're thinking of you.