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**MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL:**

Annual Membership renewal for June 1997 - May 1998 is due. Just use the remittance slip inside and the new convenient return envelope enclosed. You can't beat it for the price! And while you're at it, include your responses to your new editor's questionnaire. It would be much appreciated.

**PENSION JUSTICE PROGRESS**

Since our last Newsletter, your PARA officers have been busy in Albany with the Alliance of Public Retiree Organizations pursuing the goal of every public retiree in the State—an automatic annual Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA).

You will recall that, last year, we reported via Special Newsletter and our November issue that we had won our fight for an ad hoc Supplemental pension increase retroactive to September 1995. We also won a major Court victory over Governor George Pataki's attempted raid on our Pension Fund. Our supplemental victory, however, was far from complete. Our Supplemental pension increase was good for only two years—September '95 through August 30, '97—giving Albany the option of continuing it for two years more, with or without a further increase, or letting it expire this fall. Hence 1997's year-long Albany efforts.

Now for a bit of COLA history. It all began back in 1967, when the Supplemental Retirement Allowance program began. At that time, it was designed to respond to changes in the cost of living and thus, over the years, to help keep retirees close to the financial position they had had upon retirement. The decline in national and state economies beginning in the early '70's, however, resulted in shrinking national and state revenues, and caused this program to be suspended. Thereafter, rather than develop a regular and reliable plan for improving the income of retirees, New York State fell back on a do-it-when-we-get-around-to-it process of ad hoc pension legislation. Last year's supplement was the latest of these.

Over the 30 years since 1967, pension supplements have been enacted only eight times, and then always on the same ad hoc basis. This has been forcing retirees to return to Albany year after year seeking continuation of the previous supplement together with additional benefit improvements. In most years, they came away empty handed. Last year's wo-year supplementation bill, which we won, came cou-

pled with that unconstitutional attempt to raid Retirement System pension funds, which happily was defeated.

What your Port Authority Retirement Association is fighting for now is transformation of last year's temporary Supplemental Allowance into a permanent part of everyone's pension, plus a permanent annual Cost of Living Allowance (COLA) pension increase that would be piled up on top of it.

Our hoped-for permanent COLA is being called a "Performance COLA" because it would be based on NYSERS' Pension Fund investment portfolio performance, a reflection of inflation, rather than each year's actual inflation rate. It would be given every year that NYSERS' Pension Fund investment portfolio was able to report a five-year annual average profit of 10% or more. Each year's new COLA would be pyramided on top of all the others.

This 5-year profit averaging, incidentally, would be welcome protection for us, because it would work toward keeping our annual COLAs coming even in those bad years when NYSERS' Pension Fund profit dropped below 10%.

And how much would we get? Under provisions of this bill, pension COLAs would be across-the-board increases of up to 3%. They would be based on an annually increased portion of each eligible retiree's official, supplement-enhanced "Option Zero" pension allotment—regardless of Option actually taken.

This year's COLA (we hope), will be based on the first \$12,500 of every eligible retiree's Option Zero pension base. Starting next year, everyone's pension base will be increased 1.5% a year to further account for inflation.

Again—how much?! For starters, multiply \$12,500 (this year's pension base) by 3% (the maximum percentage of NYSERS's pension fund profits allotted to us so far). Comes to \$375 for this fiscal year. Right? Next year, our pension bases rise to \$12,687 (\$12,500 X 1.5% annual base increase). This raises next year's potential COLA up to

*(Continued on Page 2)*

## PENSION JUSTICE PROGRESS (continued from page 1)

\$380.61 (\$12,687 X 3%). And so on.

Who will be eligible for COLA's? All those who are at least age 62 and retired for a minimum of five years; all those who retired at 55 or there-about and have been out on their own for 10 years; and all who are on disability retirement and have been out five years.

Admittedly, this year's proposed Performance COLA is not perfect but it's a great start. And the PARA's good friend and former P.A. Commissioner, New York State Comptroller H. Carl McCall, has fashioned it to be of benefit not only to the State's multitudinous public retirees, but also to their budget-minded state and local governmental employers; and thus to gain the votes of as many of Albany's budget-minded legislators as is needed to get it passed.

The legislative sweetener for each of NYSERS' public employer members would be a percentage of the pension portfolio fund's extra profits, when available, to be used to reduce their own yearly share of per-employee NYSERS contributions. To please budget-minded Albany legislators, another percentage of profits would also be locked into a

special new NYSERS pension fund that would be used to enhance our COLAs when a five-year annual average NYSERS pension portfolio profit sagged unduly—all without costing tax-payers a cent.

The Assembly bill is numbered: A.8161, and is exactly as outlined earlier in this story. It is precisely what we are fighting for. The Senate version is something else! Numbered S.4509, it is a watered-down version which requires an annual renewal fight, just as we have now with ad hoc legislation. It is also defective in other areas.

Retirees living within New York State should write their respective senators without delay, requesting them to amend S.4509 to conform to A.8161, and to urge both their Assembly and Senate representatives to vote for passage of these bills. All you out-of-staters—Do please write or call your NYS friends and relatives and ask them to write on your behalf. For more on that, see Page 3.

*"Where the heart is willing, it will find a thousand ways, but where it is unwilling, it will find a thousand excuses."*

## A MESSAGE FROM YOUR PRESIDENT

This is not going to be an on-going feature in your Newsletter but since it is my last as your president, I thought I would exercise my prerogative and put in a few cents worth.

First, have you noticed how your last issue and this one have taken on a new flavor and have a little bounce to them? This is due in no small measure to the deft hand of our Editor-in-Chief and recent Board member Pat Beckhard. She brings all the skills and professionalism with her that she gained in numerous P.A. publications before retirement and I can assure you the Newsletter will only get better.

This is not to say that past contributors have not been appreciated but we made our P.A. careers in different areas and the Newsletter did not come easy. It has been a real

pleasure to work with Pat on these last two issues and other Board members before her.

My term in office actually expired on 12/31/96 but the Board was kind enough to let me stay on to complete some unfinished business. As the Board selects my successor, you can be assured of my continued involvement in retirees matters even after my relocation takes place. You have an outstanding Board of Directors who represent you well and it has been my pleasure to work with them over the years.

Best,  
Al Rubbert

*"Paper is patient—but the Reader isn't."*

### Port Authority Retirees Association, Inc.

P.O. Box 331, Ship Bottom, NJ 08008-0212

Please print or type:

\_\_\_\_\_ (\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_  
Last Name First Home Phone Number Year

Address \_\_\_\_\_ Town \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

CHECK  :

Name, address, or phone number changed?  Yes  No  
Enclosed is \$5.00 Annual Membership Dues (June 1997 through May 1998)

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.

## HERE'S TO YOUR HEALTH

Keep the benefits questions coming, members. Write to PARA, P.O. Box 331, Ship Bottom, N.J. 08008-0212. Although we can't answer all your questions here because of space limitations, we will try to respond to each question one way or another.

*Q - My spouse was seriously ill, and upon her discharge from the hospital, our family physician recommended that we have a private duty nurse at our home to care for her. The bill for five days was substantial but Prudential would not accept any of it. Don't we have coverage for private duty nursing?*

**A -** Yes, the Prudential Major Medical plan does cover private duty nursing, but only if the patient is seriously ill (i.e. in a life-threatening condition.) A good rule in such instances is to call Pru and check first, before engaging a private duty nurse. In your case, it appears that your spouse was recovering at home after routine surgery, presumably without life-threatening complications requiring constant professional care. For this reason, Pru found the services not medically necessary and therefore not reimbursable.

*Q - Am I entitled to personal passes for P.A. tunnels and bridges now that I am retired?*

**A -** Indeed you are. Under existing P.A. policy, the same rules that applied to you as an active employee apply in

retirement. As a retiree you are entitled to only five books of personal passes a year, ordered one book at a time. Beware, however, not to lend your passes to anyone else, even your spouse. And no, you don't have to be the driver of a vehicle going through on one of your P.A. passes—but you must be a passenger and be able to present Port Authority I.D. (i.e. your retiree I.D. card).

The P.A. insists that you use their official requisition form for your orders. We've printed one on page 6 for you. Photocopy it for your P.A. orders. Then, if you will, please clip and return the PARA Newsletter readership poll on page 5 to us with your comments and preferences.

*Q - With all the P.A. downsizing in recent years, are we facing a reduction in retiree benefits as a further cost-saving measure?*

**A -** As we all know, very little is carved in stone. However, on a more positive note, there have over the years been changes in benefits for active employees. These have included reduced benefits for the treatment of mental and nervous disorders, and more recently, the introduction of required contributions for health insurance. To date, none of these changes have been passed along to retirees. Consequently, we can be cautiously optimistic about the foreseeable future.

## WANT A PERMANENT COLA?

Harold Milley, PARA's very active President Emeritus, published the first of many "Suggestions for writing to your legislators" in a 1980's issue. Below, we're running his suggestions again because the need once again is NOW. Your organization and its Alliance partners have been pushing our Albany legislators hard for years to win a permanent Cost of Living Adjustment pension increase. Last year's ad hoc supplement was a good start. Now we may be getting very close to a bigger victory. But we can't get close enough unless Albany feels the pressure of our needs. That means write; or call; or FAX, or "E"-mail. Soonest!

**IMPORTANT:** Always start your communications by identifying the legislation you're talking about by Bill Number—Senate Bill #: S4509, and Assembly Bill #: A8161.

If you have a New York return address (since our pensions come out of Albany), use it. If you live out-of-state, ask a New York State relative or good friend to write with feeling on your behalf. Sending a draft to your friend or relative to use won't hurt. And by the way, the same letter-to-Albany can go to all. Our elected officials are busy enough. They won't read each others' mail.

*"Some folks may succeed because they're destined to, but most succeed because they're determined to."*

### SUGGESTIONS FOR WRITING

1. Address elected officials as The Honorable \_\_\_\_\_ (name), but begin your letter with: Dear Governor, Dear Senator, or Dear Mr. Speaker or Assemblyman. (See address list at box bottom.)
2. Keep it short, straight and simple. Brief, handwritten, to-the-point letters in your own words work best even if your handwriting is as bad as your Newsletter editor's.
3. If none of us can find time to write, why expect legislators to find time for our needs.
4. Always remember. The squeaky wheel gets the grease.
5. Now get out pen and paper and write to:  
Honorable George E. Pataki      Honorable Joseph L. Bruno  
Governor of New York      Majority Leader, NY State Senate  
Executive Chamber      Legislative Office Building  
N.Y. State Capitol      State Capitol  
Albany, N.Y. 12247      Albany, N.Y. 12247  
Dear Governor Pataki      Dear Senator Bruno:

Honorable Sheldon Silver  
Speaker of the House  
New York State Assembly  
Albany, N.Y. 12248  
Dear Mr. Speaker:

## The ALLIANCE—What Is It? What Does It Do For Us

PARA mentions the Alliance so often we thought a refresher on the subject might be timely.

The Alliance—more properly Alliance of Public Retiree Organizations of New York—is the Albany-based coalition of some 40 public retiree associations throughout the state. It represents more than 510,000 retirees whose pensions come from The New York State Employees Retirement Systems' multitudinous state and local pension systems. In a word, it is our on-the-spot group representative (make that "lobby") in Albany.

The Alliance acts as our Albany communication center. It keeps tabs and makes reports on all governmental

legislation and policies of concern to us. It coordinates the formulation of proposals for needed new or revised legislation. It coordinates rallies to Albany of as many thousands of retirees as it can muster. And it gives us the needed strength of the entire state-wide Alliance membership in fighting to transform proposed improvements into law.

The Alliance was formed in the mid-1980's. At birth, it had only five members. Your PARA was one of the founders, and continues to be among the most hard-working. Albany is almost a second home for board members Al Gonseth and Clay Peavey, who live nearby, as well as for Al Rubbert who lives a two-hour drive away.

## WATCHING WASHINGTON

PARA's recommended library reading this month is "What the Big Budget Deal Means to You," which you'll find in the June '97 issue of Money Magazine. It takes a hard look at President Clinton's recent "dramatic but sketchy handshake agreement" with Congress on what provisions affecting your finances will go into the nation's new budget.

That budget, both sides agree, should somehow lead to balancing the budget by 2002 and still keep most people happy. Among other provisions, it proposes decreased taxes you'd have to pay upon selling your old empty-nest home before moving to Florida, North or South Carolina, Arizona or some other P.A. retiree paradise. Indeed, if you've lived in your old house for decades and seen its value soar sky high, you might not have to pay IRA taxes on it at all unless its selling price had reached \$1,000,000.

That Washington agreement also proposes some comforting tuition relief for you with children still fac-

ing college. Just who might be eligible for such tuition tax reductions is still a matter of inter-Washington negotiation. How much deduction is also a matter of debate. Money Magazine quotes the head of College Money, a New Jersey financial planning firm, as recommending: "Plan for college as you otherwise would. You're still going to have to write out the same check."

Finally, of course, budget negotiators agreed to drop a plan to fiddle with the way the consumer price index is calculated. That plan would have affected our Social Security COLAs, our Medicare protection, and heaven knows what else.

On the negative side, it appears pretty certain that Medicare premiums will go up starting next year even without help from a diddled CPI. Money Mag suggests that Part B Medicare premiums could rise to \$67 a month by the year 2002. "If you're retired, budget for those higher premiums, which are likely to pass," Money recommends.

## MEDICARE NOTES

Every so often, the Health Care Financing Administration of the U.S. Department of Health & Human Resources publishes an updated edition of its very helpful "YOUR MEDICARE HANDBOOK." Its latest effort (dated 1996) was distributed a few months ago. If you didn't receive a copy and your nearest library also lacks one, we suggest that it's still worth buying. Cost: \$2.25. The U.S.

Government Printing Office handles distribution. Just call them on 1-202-512-1800, and ask for Publication No. HCFA - 10050. Pay by check, Visa, Discovery or Master Card. If you're willing to wait for the 1997 edition, which should be available by the end of this year or early next, call the U.S. Medicare Hot Line for free on 1-800-638-6833.

## STRAIGHT FROM THE SHOULDER

1. Over 315 Port Authority employees retired last December and each received a letter of Welcome and a Newsletter complete with application blank. As we go to press, over 100 of these recent retirees have already responded and joined PARA. Again, in numbers there is strength! Welcome!
2. Since our last Newsletter, there have been 7 meetings of the Alliance of Public Retiree Organizations in Albany as well as special meetings with the Comptroller and PARA was represented at every one of them. Your voice is being heard!
3. It has been suggested that PARA establish a Home Page on the Internet enabling members to post their views on issues of importance to retirees. Any PARA members who have net access and literacy are requested to comment on the benefit they feel PARA might gain by establishing a presence on the net.

Address changes should be reported both to PARA at the address on our mast head of this Newsletter and to the PA of NY-NJ, Compensation and Benefits Division, 1 WTC, 61W, NY, NY 10048.

<b>Sources of Help:</b>	P.A. Benefits	800-269-4280
	Retirement Systems	518-474-7736
	Prudential Insurance	800-772-4683
	Social Security	800-772-1213

*"The only sure way to double your money is to fold it  
and put it in your pocket."*

## PLEASE HELP US BROADEN YOUR PARA NEWSLETTER TELL US WHAT YOU'D LIKE TO READ ABOUT

Please rate the following suggestions on a scale of 1 (i.e. never) to 10 (the best). That done, would you give us further suggestions? Then mail all in the enclosed envelope (together with your dues, please) to: **Port Authority Retirees Association Inc. Newsletter, P.O. Box 331, Ship Bottom, N.J. 08008-0212.** Now your rating, please, on the following.

- 1 - Updates on NYSERS' pension negotiation progress in Albany.
- 2 - Health Insurance options.
- 3 - Q&A's on retirees benefits of various sorts, or whatever.
- 4 - An all-inclusive "Letters to the Editor" column.
- 5 - Articles, letters or just newsy notes from those of you who have begun a new post-retirement career, returned to work in a field that utilizes your P.A. experience, or can tell us about others who have.
- 6 - Articles, letters or newsy notes from members who are doing volunteer work or undertaking other non-paying projects of interest.
- 7 - Articles from members on who's doing what for

enlightenment or amusement out there—from golfing, fishing, surfing, to playing bridge, baseball, grandparent or the horses, to brushing up on Spanish to working on a new college degree, to running for governor).

8 - Pertinent cartoons or comic strips from you who could be talked into volunteering. (We can't yet afford to run photos, but our printer can run pen or pencil line drawings.) Interested?

9 - Stories, articles, remembrances or just news & notes telling about the most memorable (i.e. exciting, significant, satisfying, interesting, funniest, scariest or whatever) times, assignments, projects or incidents you can recall from your PA days.

10 - Coverage of Port Service Club activities.

11 - Periodic short NEWS & NOTES about what the PA is doing, building, re-doing, emphasizing, thinking about undertaking, leasing out or selling.

12 - NEWS & NOTES from all of you who will write to tell us about get-togethers with other PA alumni in your area.

13 - 20 - Your suggestions too, please.

Now-Clip and Mail-and Thanks



Dear Retiree:

Please use this form when you are ready to order a book of personal passes.

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

EMPLOYEE  
NUMBER: \_\_\_\_\_

DATE OF  
REQUEST: \_\_\_\_\_

This form should be returned to:

The Port Authority of NY & NJ  
Room 64 East  
One World Trade Center  
New York, New York 10048

Attn: Supervisor, Payroll & Admin. Svcs.

If you have any questions, please contact the Supervisor, Payroll & Admin. Svcs. at (212) 435-4692.