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MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL:

Annual Membership renewal for June 2000-May 2001 is overdue. An asterisk* on the mailing label indicates that PARA records do not show your current dues payment. If you've already renewed your membership, ignore the reminder. If you haven't please complete the form inside and mail together with your remittance. Thank You!

COLA 2000 UPDATE

By Al Rubbert, PARA President

In our last Newsletter, we reported on the 1999 kick-off meetings for the "Year 2000 Costs of Living Adjustment" campaign. These meetings were held throughout New York State. Our champion, New York State Comptroller H. Carl McCall, was the principal speaker. As a result of these meetings, momentum has increased and there is significant activity on this subject in Albany.

One of the most important areas of concentration has been the effort to get all 8 retirement systems in the state to agree on a single cost of living (COLA) package. You will recall that in prior years, they could not agree to support a common bill. As members of the New York State and Local Retirement Systems, PARA has had to settle for *ad hoc* Supplementation bills, which were finally passed after extensive lobbying. These supplements, while they are some improvement, have been random and in amounts too small to protect retirees from the cumulative and devastating impact of inflation.

PARA, a member of the 520,000-strong **Alliance of Public Retiree Organizations (APRO)**, more familiarly know as "The Alliance," along with several other major retiree organizations, such as the Retired Teachers Association and the Retired Public Employee Association, continues to push forward to acquire a permanent, annual cost of living increase. Our efforts are aimed at enlisting support among the legislators for essential components that must be included in any COLA bill.

The following items have been agreed upon by APRO:

- Public retirees who have reached age 55 and have been retired three years or more would be eligible. Disabled retirees would be eligible regardless of age.
- After the fifth year of retirement, retirees would receive an annual increase equal to 50% of the increase in the Consumer Price Index.
- There would be a second calculation for those who have been retired more than 20 years. This second calculation in most instances, would produce a new increase that in most instances would be larger than the first calculation. The larger increase would be used.
- In addition, public retirees who retired in 1970 or earlier would receive a one-time, lump-sum "cost-of-living-correction" of \$500 on September 1, 2000.
- The pension "cap" on which annual adjustments would be calculated would be increased substantially from the \$14,000 current level to \$20,000. (Note: this is always based on the "0" option level.)
- Current supplementation would be included in the new COLA payments.
- Increases would be effective September 1, 2000.
- All eight public pension systems would be included.

Clearly, these items do not include all that public retirees deserve; however, they happen to pass the litmus tests of *affordability* and *passability* by the legislature. They will serve as a solid first block upon which to build the COLA pyramid of the future.

(Continued on Page 2)

COLA 2000 UPDATE (continued from page 1)

PARA is engaged in discussions with other retiree organizations and with unions in an effort to build an even greater coalition of support for a common COLA bill.

IF ALL RETIREES, RETIREE ORGANIZATIONS AND UNIONS WILL TRUMPET THE COLA HORN WITH A STRONG, UNIFIED VOICE,

LEGISLATORS AND THE GOVERNOR WILL CERTAINLY HEAR OUR RALLYING CRY: A *PERMANENT AUTOMATIC ANNUAL COLA IN 2000!*"

"The tragedy of life is not so much what we suffer, but rather what we missed."

GETTING YOUR LEGISLATOR TO LISTEN

The following is directed principally toward New York State PARA members, but it would be helpful if non-resident retirees would contact relatives and friends living in the Empire State and ask them to join the cause. Every little bit helps.

PARA has learned directly from the legislators that personal, handwritten letters from constituents are the most effective messages they receive. They are more effective than either typed letters or email. Legislators realize that email is more convenient for the sender, since several messages can be sent at once, and the sender does not have to bother with postage or a trip to the mailbox. That's precisely why a handwritten letter has more clout. Legislators understand that the effort it takes to write one means the sender has strong feelings about the matter.

Letters do not have to be long or complicated, but they should tell something about you and your concerns. For example, when writing about the need for a COLA, tell your legislator exactly how your standard of living has dropped because, over the years, your pension has not nearly kept up with the increase in the cost of living. Be specific, if you can, about the things you have had to do without, and the financial problems you have to cope with. It is not absolutely necessary to know a particular bill number or the bill's details. Just write and demand a COLA.

Legislators listen best in an election year, which this year is for all our legislators. Ask exactly what your legislator will do to get a COLA bill passed in 2000. Don't let them shift responsibility by promising, "I will vote for it if it comes to the floor for a vote." Ask them to pressure their leaders, especially Senator Bruno and Speaker of the House Silver into ensuring that a COLA bill does come to the floor for a vote.

Don't wait. We won't have an opportunity like this

for another two years. If we don't let our legislators know of our needs now, we will have only ourselves to blame if they fail to pass a COLA this year.

You undoubtedly know who your representatives are. If you don't, call your local Board of Elections and ask for their names and addresses. You can also reach any of them by writing to them at either:

New York State Senate, Albany, N.Y. 12247 *or*

New York State Assembly, Albany, N.Y. 12248

While you are at it, you might cc. these top officials and send them a copy:

Governor George E. Pataki

NYS Executive Chamber

Albany, N.Y. 12224

Tele - 518-474-1041

Speaker Sheldon Silver

NYS Assembly

Albany, N.Y. 12248

Tele - 518-455-3791

Senator Joseph L. Bruno

Majority Leader

NYS Senate

Albany, N.Y. 12247

Tele - 518-455-3191

When writing or calling, you should refer to the COLA bill in the Senate and in the Assembly. Again, do it now!

"Some people are like popular songs that you only sing for a short time."

A COLA FOR THE PRICE OF TWO CAPPUCHINOS

What does \$5 buy these days? A couple of fancy coffees in a cardboard cup; two issues of the NY Sunday Times; a large bag of popcorn at the movies; and the annual dues for the Port Authority Retirees Association.

What a bargain the PARA dues are, because your contribution to our efforts can lead to the extra retirement income that will pay for all of the other things and more.

In our fall Newsletter item "Past, Present and Future," we reported on the various activities PARA is involved in that further PA retirees' interests. Among these are: our semi-annual Newsletter; special communications on critical retiree items; PARA's membership in the Alliance of Public Retiree Organizations (APRO) in Albany; special mailings; and PARA's attendance and representation at pension rallies throughout the state. These activities, along with those of other retiree organizations, have resulted in supplemental pension increases for qualified members over the past four years. At this time, those who retired in 1993 or earlier are eligible for supplemental increases. As recent retirees become longer-term members of the retirement system, more retirees will benefit from our efforts.

Almost all of you have paid PARA's very low annual dues of \$5. In the interest of fairness to dues paying members, if you are one of those who have forgotten to pay your dues. please do so now. It is through the support of dues-paying members that we have been able to be as successful as we have been in Albany. If we are to succeed in the months ahead in our pursuit of a permanent COLA, we will need all PA retirees to support PARA.

"When you have been wronged, a poor memory is your best response."

HEALTH INSURANCE REMINDER

In case you haven't heard or have not yet reacted, the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey and United HealthCare are pleased to announce the availability of a new process for handling the submission of claims for Medicare Part B and Durable Medical Equipment (DME) for secondary coverage administered by United HealthCare. This process is entitled Medicare Cross-Over and is designed to streamline the process in coordinating coverage between Medicare and United HealthCare.

To take advantage of this streamlined process, complete the reprinted Medicare Cross-Over Enrollment Form, you'll find as the last page of this Newsletter, and return it as soon as possible. Your spouse may also participate in this process if she/he is eligible for Medicare and does not have any other group medical benefits coverage from another source.

This new process does not apply to Medicare Part A or to prescription drug expenses. Claims for those types of expenses should continue to be filed as they have in the past. Remember, in order for you to take advantage of this process for your Part B and DME secondary claims, it is important that you complete and mail the program's enrollment form as soon as possible to:

MEDICARE CROSS-OVER PROGRAM
 United HealthCare
 P.O. Box 30243
 Utica, New York, 13599-4131

United HealthCare tells us that your Cross-Over service should be activated within six to eight weeks after the company receives your form. Questions? Your primary source should be the Port Authority/UHC-trained customer service representatives who staff the Port Authority's new dedicated toll-free United Health-Care number: 1-877-1391.

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

Check
 P.A. Employee
 P.A. Retiree

Address _____ Town _____ State _____ Zip _____
 CHECK

Name, address, or phone number changed? Yes No

Enclosed is \$5.00 Annual Membership Dues (June 2000 through May 2001)

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.

MEDICARE CROSS-OVER ENROLLMENT FORM

Return To:
Medicare Cross-Over Program
PO Box 3024
Utica, NY 13599-4131

The Port Authority of NY & NJ / PATH

Yes! I want to participate in the Medicare Cross-Over Program.

Retiree: (Please complete even if retiree is deceased) (PLEASE PRINT)	Please check one below:
Name _____	PA _____ PATH _____
Soc. Sec. # _____ - _____ - _____	Date of Birth _____ / _____ / _____
Address _____	
City _____	State* _____ Zip _____
Medicare Claim # _____ - _____ - _____	
(Enter the Medicare Claim# as it appears on your Red, White and Blue Medicare Health Insurance Card)	

Spouse:	
Name _____	PA _____ PATH _____
Soc. Sec. # _____ - _____ - _____	Date of Birth _____ / _____ / _____
Medicare Claim # _____ - _____ - _____	
(Enter the Medicare Claim# as it appears on your Red, White and Blue Medicare Health Insurance Card)	

* If you live part-time in other states during the year where you might incur medical expenses, please indicate these additional states below (maximum of two additional states):
Additional State 1: _____ Additional State 2: _____

STRAIGHT FROM THE SHOULDER

1. **After serving as our Treasurer for almost a decade, we regret to report that Barney Duffy has resigned.** Barney is off to sunny Florida to enjoy a well-deserved retirement. We were fortunate to have had Barney for all this time. Thanks to his efforts and expertise, PARA has come through many audits with flying colors. We wish him the best in his new home and appreciate all he has done for PARA. Many thanks, Barney.

We are fortunate to have Bob Dannenbaum as Barney's replacement as Treasurer. Bob, a retired P.A. Police Officer, lived in the same New Jersey town as Barney, so the hand-off was accomplished with minimum delay. The chores of our treasurer are numerous. They include tracking memberships, bank statements, expenditures, and many other items. Bob has already settled in to tackle the task. Welcome to the Board of Directors, Bob. We look forward to working with you in the years ahead.

2. **For those of you on the net who have not yet signed on,** Bob Foote, at bobfoote@tds.net, continues to accept email addresses. The list is growing rapidly, and we hope it continues to do so.
3. **One hundred and twenty seven P.A. employees joined the retiree ranks in December.** We greeted each of them with a welcome letter, and a copy of our December newsletter that included a membership application blank and a self-addressed envelope should they decide to join. Not all responses are in yet, but our membership now hovers around the 4200 mark.
4. **The Alliance of Public Retiree Organizations (APRO) has been meeting monthly in Albany** since our last Newsletter, and PARA was represented at every meeting.
5. Your Board of Directors met at the GWB Administration Building on April 12. Our next meeting is scheduled for May to develop an Albany COLA strategy, and to plan legislative visitations.

Retired PARA members would send address changes to *PA Today*, 1 World Trade Center, 68 South, NY 10048, and to one of the Post Office boxes listed on PARA's Newsletter masthead.

Sources of Help:

<i>P.A. Benefits:</i>	800-269-4280, or 212-425-6163
<i>Retirement System:</i>	518-474-7736
<i>Prudential:</i>	800-772-4683
<i>United HealthCare:</i>	877-259-1391

"Life is not a problem to be solved, but a reality to be experienced."

