General Membership Meeting Highlights:

The Constitutional Convention

By Meredith Inkeles

Since 1789, every twenty years, New Yorkers go to the polls to vote on whether to hold a State Constitutional Convention. On the November 7, 2017 ballot, New Yorkers will see on the back of the ballot the question, “Shall there be a convention to revise the constitution and amend the same?” At the June 6, 2017 WCT General Membership Meeting, Michael Grubiak (NYSUT Regional Political Organizer: Hudson Valley) explained to the attending members and retirees why we should vote NO on this ballot question. Here are some of his comments:

Public employee pensions are on the chopping block. Current and future retiree pensions are in danger. Don’t believe the rumors that current retiree pensions are safe; there is no magic wording that “grandfathers in” current retiree pensions because once the state’s constitution is opened, every word, clause, and amendment can be erased.

Some skeptics may think, “We live in New York; this could never happen here!” That is exactly what people thought in Alaska, Maine, Mississippi, New Hampshire, and Rhode Island, but it happened in those states when a state Constitutional Convention was held. There is currently a national movement to get rid of pensions and push for 401(k)-style accounts. The people pushing for this however seem to have forgotten that 401(k)s were never meant to be a pension plan. They originally started in the business world to compensate workers when higher-ups were getting profit shares.

In Alaska in 2005, the teachers’ retirement system was closed and all new members were put into a 401(k)-style plan. In Maine during 2001, the cost of living adjustment for all retirees was suspended. In Mississippi in 2010, the employee contribution rate for all employees was increased from a rate of 7.2% to 9%. In New Hampshire in 2011, all new hires and non-vested employees were placed in a new tier with lower benefits. Also, in Rhode Island in 2011, all new hires and all members with less than 20 years of service were placed in a new plan with greatly reduced benefits and higher employee costs.

Opening the constitution can also result in New York becoming a “Right to Work State.” Currently there are about 27 “Right to Work” states where collective bargaining is not allowed. New Yorkers also need to be aware that workers’ compensation benefits could also be gone as well as the right to public education. There is also the possibility for public school funds being given to parochial and religious schools instead of public

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WCT Celebrates Teachers
By Diane Di Chiara

On Wednesday, June 7th, the Wappingers Congress of Teachers honored its own members. The honorees included retirees, teachers with 25 years of service, newly certified National Board teachers, tenured teachers, new teachers with 1 – 3 years of service and their mentors.

The celebration took place on the grounds of the union office on a day when the sun shone. The honorees feasted on a barbecue provided by Smoke Haus. Several members of the Board of Education stopped by to congratulate the teachers. The BOE members included Peggy Kelland, Robert Rubin, Paul Galletta, Barbara Goodman, John Lumia, and Ed Sloshower. Also in attendance were Superintendent Carrión and Dr. Dwight Bonk.
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Pasquale Delli Carpini, Martha Bilsback (retiree), and Superintendent Carrión.

Pasquale Delli Carpini, Elizabeth Dean (retiree), and Superintendent Carrión.

Pasquale Delli Carpini, Laurie deChamplain (retiree), and Superintendent Carrión.

Pasquale Delli Carpini, John March (retiree), and Superintendent Carrión.
WCT Celebrates Teachers  continued from page 3

Pasquale Delli Carpini, Jim Bulson (retiree), and Superintendent Carrión.

Rob Lynch, Brandon Opitz, Anne Seymour, & Dawn Turpin

Amanda Harden, Rena Finsmith, & Jen Malizia

Thom Piliouras, Pasquale Delli Carpini, Meri Piliouras (retiree)

Retirees not pictured:
Kathryn Brennaman, John Brophy, Adela Gardner, Patricia Gullick, Mary Langert, Michael Lyons, Eric Sautter, & Mary Witkowski
WCT Celebrates Teachers  continued from page 4

National Board Recipients: Patricia Fitzgibbons (left) and Martha Jones (right).

BOE Trustee Paul Galletta and BOE Trustee Robert Rubin

WCT President Pasquale Delli Carpini addressing the attendees.

Superintendent Carrión addressing the party goers.
Gayhead’s Focus on Mental Health

By Karen Ferrara

April was Stress Awareness Month! Let’s be honest here…we are all under a tremendous amount of stress as teachers, parents, spouses, and many other roles we take on in life. Stress has a major influence upon our mood, our sense of well-being, behavior, and our health. It is often difficult to face and acknowledge the amount of stress we have in our lives. Some may not even realize or recognize the various ways stress presents itself on a daily basis. The truth is we all have the power within ourselves to make it better by just starting small…take some baby steps.

Kelly Hanna, a first-grade teacher at Gayhead, helps her colleagues combat stress every month. She offers weekly Yoga classes, in addition to guided meditations, and the occasional inspirational email.

May was Mental Health Awareness Month. Gayhead began their month of awareness with a ribbon cutting ceremony for NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness). Norma Albin and Colleen Burger are both very active in NAMI and bringing mental health awareness to Gayhead. Thank you to these two for bringing Tina Lee from NAMI to Gayhead to talk to the staff about mental health.

Mental Health Awareness Month at Evans

By Kristen Glas

May was Mental Health Awareness Month! Our hardworking and dedicated school social worker and school psychologist, Laura Brundage and Melissa Bengel, put together some things to celebrate this month and raise awareness. They go above and beyond to meet the needs of our students and families here at Evans.
Back to the Pond
by Lea Chiappetta

On May 30, 2017, Fishkill held its annual “Back to the Pond” day where high school seniors come back to their elementary school in their cap and gowns. The seniors parade through the hallways and all of the elementary students clap and cheer for them. They then get to talk to all of their former teachers. Mary Turi and Jill Flannigan from Fishkill Elementary school started this yearly tradition last year, along with help from building principal Andrew McNally and John Jay principal Bonnie King. It is a fantastic celebration that we will look forward to every year!

General Membership Meeting Highlights

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schools. Don’t forget, basic rights such as freedom of speech, the right to assemble, economic protections, and state debt limits for the legislation could also disappear.

If the above reasons haven’t convinced you to vote no on November 7, 2017 then what about this? If the Constitutional Convention goes ahead, 204 delegates need to be elected. Typically elected officials run for these positions instead of regular people and there is no limit on how much money a delegate can spend on campaigning. Each delegate gets a salary and benefits as well as a pension for serving at this convention which can run for an unspecified duration. During the last Constitutional Convention of all 204 delegates, all were elected officials who already receive a salary, benefits, and a pension. They do not get one or the other, they would get a double salary, double benefits, and a double pension. Plus, it is estimated that a state Constitutional Convention could cost tax-payers anywhere from $320-350 million dollars.

Michael Grubiak also reminded the group that there is already a way to make changes to parts of the constitution without opening the entire document. This is done through amendments. Recently amendments were added to the constitution to allow casino gambling, and making the NYS Senate and Assembly paperless. In the end, the most important messages we need to share with our colleagues, friends, family, and neighbors are that the Constitutional Convention creates wasteful spending, double-dipping corrupt Albany politicians, and a threat to labor rights and collective bargaining. Go to wcteachers.org to learn more about the Constitutional Convention and to see Michael Grubiak’s presentation.
HEALTH CARE PROXIES: DIFFICULT QUESTIONS
By: Mirkin & Gordon, P.C.

Health care proxies have proven popular among New Yorkers, as they enable individuals to appoint a trusted family member or friend to make health care decisions in case he or she loses capacity to make those decisions personally. However, there are difficult problems and questions that can arise in connection with the creation and use of health care proxies.

One issue that can arise is that of competency. For example, someone who is experiencing dementia, or someone who is incapacitated to the point of needing a guardian, may lack the competency to make a major health care decision — like undergoing surgery — because of their loss of certain faculties. However, that may not prevent them from appointing a health care proxy to make that decision. The person may be lucid enough to know that they are unable to make such decisions on their own and can therefore be qualified to appoint a proxy.

In rare cases where there is both a guardian and a health care agent, the health care agent will have decision-making priority over the guardian when it comes to health care decisions.

While the proxy has a limited right to receive certain medical information necessary to make informed decisions regarding the principal’s health care, it is best for them to have a HIPAA authorization.

It is important to note also that when appointing a health care proxy, only a single agent can be appointed. The law is intentionally put in place so that decisions are not made by committee, but by a sole agent given the authority in case of an individual’s incapacity.

An integral part of understanding health care proxies is that it is only when an individual is determined to be incapacitated that the proxy is able to make decisions. As long as the patient has the capacity to make decisions, they alone will continue to do so, regardless of whether they have assigned a health care proxy. The proxy also usually can’t override a decision that a patient has already made — such as a do-not-resuscitate (DNR) order — unless there is evidence that the patient did not understand what they were agreeing to or was coerced into signing a DNR. Moreover, the proxy is not allowed to make personal decisions on behalf of the patient, such as who can visit and when.

A proxy does have substantial decision-making authority, however, and can remove a patient from a hospital even if it’s against medical advice, provided the decision is consistent with the patient’s reasonably known wishes. Additionally, the proxy can complete a MOLST (Medical Order for Life Sustaining Treatment) on behalf of the patient, regarding end-of-life decisions.

Although appointing health care proxies can seem like a difficult question fraught with uncomfortable decisions, the attorneys available under the Union’s legal services program are able to assist and counsel, if so desired.
Members’ Classified Ads

18 cu ft. Refrigerator/freezer  6 mo. Old. Purchased for grown kids who moved. Come and take it for $300 (originally $449) Susan Roger  845 226 8285


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Cell Phone: 914-204-9062
Email: rseipp@gwnsecurities.com
To learn more about me and my story, go to:
https://vimeo.com/123792899

This Week in Labor History

http://www.unionist.com

June 6, 1996—Labor Party founding convention opens in Cleveland, Ohio.

June 7, 2006—The United Steelworkers and the Sierra Club announce the formation of a strategic alliance to pursue a joint public policy agenda under the banner of Good Jobs, A Clean Environment, and A Safer World.

June 8, 1852—The earliest recorded strike by Chinese immigrants to the U.S. occurred when stonemasons, who were brought to San Francisco to build the three-story Parrott granite building — made from Chinese prefabricated blocks — struck for higher pay.

June 8, 1971—New York City drawbridge tenders, in a dispute with the state over pension issues, leave a dozen bridges open, snarling traffic in what the Daily News described as "the biggest traffic snafu in the city's history."

June 10, 1963—President Kennedy signs a law mandating equal pay to women who are performing the same jobs as men (Equal Pay Act).

June 11, 1969—John L. Lewis dies. A legendary figure, he was president of the United Mine Workers from 1920 to 1960 and a driving force behind the formation of the Congress of Industrial Organizations.

WCT Welfare Trust Fund
Summer Legal & Financial Days
• July 20, 2017 (10am - 1pm)
• August 24, 2017 (10am - 1pm)
*If you would like to schedule an appointment, please call the union office at 227-5065.
The WCT Welfare Trust Fund

Trustees
Flip Gertler—Chairperson
Theresa Stowell—Treasurer
Erin Mulligan—Secretary
Kim Mahusky—Trustee
Pasquale Delli Carpini—Trustee
Ronnie Dwyer—WTF Administrator

LOCATION OF WCT OFFICE

280 NEW HACKENSACK RD
WAPPINGERS FALLS, NY 12590

Located directly across from Dutchess County Airport
On the right 2.5 miles from Rt 9
On the left .25 miles from All Angels and 376 Intersection
Next to Mid-Hudson Podiatry

Important Phone Numbers

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<th>WCT OFFICE:</th>
<th>845-227-5065</th>
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<tr>
<td>DANIEL H. COOK</td>
<td>800-342-6651</td>
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<td>MIRKIN &amp; GORDON</td>
<td>914-997-1576</td>
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<td>DAVIS VISION</td>
<td>800-999-5431</td>
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<td>STACY BRAUN ASSOC</td>
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