

Retiree Council 7 (Zoom) General Membership Meeting March 16, 2021

Present: 85 members participated in this meeting

Introductions: Loretta Donlon, President introduced each officer and director. Each officer and director then said a few words about his/herself and their position on the executive board:

Candace Johnson: I am the 1st VP and in charge of membership. I am the face of the person you send your membership to. I am a retiree of Liverpool School District, a former member of ULFA board, Chair of ULFA VOTE/COPE, and former building rep for Liverpool High School. At this time, we have 1432 RC7 members. Please feel free to check our newsletter or website for information.

Bill Spreter: I am the 2nd VP in charge of Legislation and Vote/Cope. I am the Central New York Coordinator for Vote/Cope out of the NYSUT Syracuse Regional Office. As a former local President, Vice President of the Hannibal Faculty Association and officer of the Oswego County Teachers, I have over forty years in union service and 34 years teaching.

We have had good news with the Senate's passage of the American Rescue Plan. It delivers \$1,400 to qualifying Americans, increased child tax credits, higher SNAP allocations, housing assistance, extra funding for COVID vaccinations, and more money for schools, and state and local governments so in need of funds as a result of the COVID crisis. Passage may occur on March 9, 2021.

The Federal aid allocated to New York's schools and state and local governments is so important because our state's budget has been depleted due to our combatting the pandemic. The budget hole is \$15 billion, and the Governor has planned on large cuts to schools, as well as state agencies and localities. With the infusion of funding from the Federal government the state's fiscal situation is improved for a short time. However, the pandemic has hit the state so hard that high budget deficits are likely to continue for years without an added rescue from the Federal government.

Consequently, the Governor, embattled with crises, supports supplanting Federal funds to schools instead of using state aid. He takes back the regular state aid by a complicated formula that is unfair to both rich and poor school districts alike. This is not what the Federal government intended when it passed its Federal aid to

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schools. Under his proposed budget, state and local funding for police, fire, EMTs, and other necessary services might be cut as well.

That's why NYSUT, in coalition with other unions, proposes a series of taxes on billionaires and ultra-millionaires in the state to help bridge the gap. And, when we look at wealth growth during the pandemic, it is estimated that the 141 billionaires in New York have earned \$81 billion more in wealth during the start of the pandemic. At the same time New York has created 72% more millionaires from 2009-2016. Many are ultra-millionaires and could afford to pay more in taxes to help all of New York emerge from this ongoing economic crisis.

Our officers and Board members have been meeting with our state and local representatives to make them aware of the ongoing budget crisis, its impact on schools and localities as well as older Americans. We sincerely hope our legislators can persuade the Governor not to take a draconian approach to the years-long budget crisis but take steps to increase revenue in order to continue services.

As always, your letters, your use of the NYSUT MAC, your donations to Vote/Cope to help fund this battle, are more than welcome and vitally necessary. Stay healthy! Get vaccinated!

Melody (Mel) Mariani: I'm Melody Mariani, but everyone calls me Mel. I am your RC7 secretary. I also am on the Committee of 100 PAC and the RAC. I retired from the Syracuse City School District. I am the one who takes all the minutes of the RC7 Board Meetings and general membership meetings and makes sure they are available to Executive Board members and all members of RC7. The minutes of this general membership meeting will be available on our website.

Carol Graham: I am RC7 treasurer and I have been the treasurer since 2014. I retired from the Solvay School district. My treasurer reports are available at every general membership meeting.

Margo Buckingham: I am the immediate past president of RC7. I have served as the RC7 treasurer as well. I retired from Fayetteville-Manlius. Currently I am on the RAC. I am also a delegate to NYSUT and AFT.

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Lilli Rastegar: I am an RC Director and the Chairperson of the Scholarship Committee. RC7 awards four \$1000 scholarships every year. If you paid your dues by 12/31/2020 you can apply for a scholarship. Applications are on the RC7 website and are being accepted from 3/15 to 4/16/2021.

Ed O'Rourke: I am an RC7 Director in charge of programs for meetings. Please feel free to email me if you have any ideas or suggestions for topics you wish to see at upcoming RC7 general membership meetings. My email is: eorourke@twcny.rr.com.

Paul Farfaglia: I am a new Director who retired from the Jordan-Elbridge Central School District. While there I served as president of the Teacher's Association for 25 years. I also served for 9 years on the NYSUT Board of Directors and for 10 years as a trustee to the NYS Teacher's Retirement System. I am currently a director on the RC7 Executive Board.

Mary Hanus: Could not be with us today, but she is a Director who organizes where we have our luncheon meetings. She is retired from Solvay School District.

Not on Retiree Council 7, but a valuable asset to us is **Anne Marie Voutsinas** who is the **NYSUT Retiree Services Consultant for RC 7 and RC 8**.

At this time Loretta asked for a moment of silence in honor of Director Phil Dello Stritto from Auburn who passed away this month and will be missed.

Today's Program: Under the Member Benefits Program there are many advantages for in-service and retiree members. The one we will focus on today with the help of our guest, Steve Kramer, from Feldman, Kramer and Monaco is the Legal Service Plan; and in particular to retirees: wills, estates, powers of attorney, and health care proxies.

Steve Kramer is a graduate of St. John's University Law School. He is a 20-year Senior Associate with the firm and his specialty is Trusts, Estates, and Elder Law.

Steve's entire presentation will be available on RC7's website.

Respectfully submitted,

Mel Mariani, Secretary