

# Great Neck Ties

Volume 36, No. 3

Summer 2016

## *Congratulations & Welcome Retiree Class of 2016*

Alisa Altabef	Parkville	Gail Keyes	South Middle
Roberta Begel	South Middle	Eileen Mangiacapre	South High
Andrew Berlin	South Middle	Sophia Mazurkiewicz	Parkville
Bonnie Bleck	North Middle	Catherine McAlynn	Phipps
Lucy Cacciatore	JF Kennedy	Eileen McPartland	South High
Joan Correll	EM Baker	Louise Millevoi	Phipps
Rita Concepcion	Phipps	Dorothy Mogenis	North High
Debra Cruz	South High	Donna Peirez	Lakeville
Kathleen Daly	South Middle	Claudia Re	South Middle
Vincent DeLucia	Phipps	Rhonda Rieger	South Middle
Linda Dragunat	South High	Jill Rubin	Saddle Rock
Barbara Eisenberg	JF Kennedy	Adria Salmon	Saddle Rock
David Graham	Lakeville	Antonina Sciacca	North High
Gail Heifetz	Parkville	Dina Siegel	Lakeville
Sheila Henchy	South Middle	Antoinette Solowsky	Phipps
Terry Hood	Phipps	Marie Van Nieuwenhuizen	North High
Leopoldine Jacklitsch	Phipps	Robert Vigus	North Middle
Lynn Kelly	North Middle		

## *A Consequential Constitutional Question*

*Maureen Newman*

Under the Constitution of NYS, every 20 years, voters must be asked, "Shall there be a convention to revise the constitution and amend same?" In its history, NYS has held nine Constitutional Conventions, three in the 20th century: 1915, 1938 and 1967. A Judiciary Convention with the very limited scope of proposing reforms for the judiciary was held in 1921. In 1997, just twenty years ago, when voters were asked, they voted "No" to a convention. Another twenty years has about passed, so come November 2017, NYS voters will again be asked, "Shall there be a convention to revise the constitution and amend same?"

State constitutions are a basic part of our democracy. Before answering the question of amending or holding a convention, voters need to know all that the process entails. We need to understand: the specific provisions that guide the process; the breadth of the powers of the convention and its delegates; and, perhaps more importantly, the

history of past conventions and amendment proposals. The adage of knowing our history or being doomed to repeat it comes to mind.

There are two ways to amend our Constitution. One is by amendment. By this process, two separately elected state legislatures must pass/approve an amendment before presenting it to voters for approval on a November ballot. This process has been used 200 times since the last major constitutional revision in 1894. It was most recently done in November 2013, when six amendments were voted on by 3,278,423 NYS voters. Five of the six amendments were approved; a sixth raising the retirement age of judges was defeated. On the individual amendments, some of the votes were close, others were not. The amendments were about casino gaming, additional civil service credit for veterans who became disabled after appointment, debt incurred for sewage treatment plants, exchange of state land with a mining company and forest preserve land. Was the sewage proposal too much info? Of importance, though, is that over three million voters had their say on each of the proposed amendments.

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## Great Neck Ties

The Retired Educators Chapter  
Great Neck Teachers Association  
343 Lakeville Rd, Great Neck, NY 11020  
516-829-9070

### REC Executive Board

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Elaine Sobel.....	Member-at-Large
Lainie Sternin.....	Member-at-Large
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Shelly Stern.....	Membership
Rose Grabelsky.....	Program



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### GNTA/REC

Affiliated with the  
Great Neck Teachers Association,  
New York State United Teachers  
& American Federation of Teachers



## President's View

Bill Toto

Congratulations! Best wishes to the 35 staff members of the Great Neck Public Schools who just retired. The Executive Board and I hope you will experience many new, varied and fulfilling experiences coupled with good health.

To review our union's history, just 37 years ago the Retired Educators Chapter began with fewer than 50 members. Today, the chapter has grown to almost 750 members. We look forward to increasing that number as members of the Class of 2016 join the largest affiliate of the Great Neck Teachers Association – the Retired Educators Chapter, sometimes referred to as the "union in retirement." Who are we? We are the continuation of the inservice union, GNTA, and its goals. As part of its objectives as an organization, the Retired Educators Chapter strives to preserve and extend benefits earned during the inservice years in the profession. It lobbies, legislatively, for continuance of defined benefit pensions, Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid and other health insurance improvements by working closely with GNTA, the New York State United Teachers (NYSUT), the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) and other retiree groups who share the same goals. Further, the Chapter seeks to cooperate with and support the ideals of the Great Neck Teachers Association and those Great Neck community groups who promote the interests of children and other humanitarian causes.

### Our Voice in Albany and Washington

With the continuing attacks on public education, teachers and teacher unions; with the senseless mandates by revengeful politicians to weaken the creativity of teachers in the classroom and the emphasis on meaningless testing and useless scores, it has become crucial for all educators to protest and fight back through the union. Retirees, at the same time, are concerned about preserving their defined benefit pensions, saving traditional Social Security from being privatized and keeping the Medicare Part B reimbursements. Having a voice in Albany and Washington via Vote-Cope is the union's strategy for "fighting the good fight." The legislative departments of NYSUT and AFT employ lobbyists to be our voice. They take their directions from resolutions passed by local unions at the NYSUT and AFT conventions. All this personal lobbying, as well as radio, TV and print ads require money. Those dollars, by law, must be separated from membership dues. The most powerful, wealthy corporate interests outspend the unions every day, trying to destroy tenure, the right to bargain as a union and our retiree benefits. Alas, do not feel helpless and hopeless.

### Be the Union! Support Vote-Cope!

- Give to Vote-Cope! It is the non-partisan political committee of our union.
- The Retired Educators Chapter's campaign for 2016

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will commence in September with a mailing to all members.

- Please give according to the guidelines which will appear in the mailing.
- Be as generous as you can. Perhaps you can increase your contribution. Try it! You may like it!
- Choose to donate by either pension deduction or by personal check.
- Protect our retirement security by giving, generously, to Vote-Cope.

## A Dilemma of "Ginormous" Proportions

Life, today, is filled with such uncertainty and strife in this "topsy-turvy" planet of ours. One such uncertainty is this election year. We will be voting for a new President of the United States on November 8th. Be sure you are registered to vote. This election is pivotal to the future of our nation and the future of the entire world. The choice is Hillary Clinton, a Democrat or Donald Trump, a Republican. There are those who have made a firm decision on one candidate. Then, there are those who are not happy with either candidate. However, as responsible citizens we must exercise our right to vote. One of the approaches I use to help me decide which candidate I will choose is to ask myself a series of questions which reflect my priorities in life as an American citizen. To those who are undecided or do not want to vote, consider the following questions to help you make a choice by Election Day:

- Which candidate will support senior citizens on Social Security and Medicare?

- Which candidate will address increasing health care costs and the skyrocketing costs of prescription drugs?

- Which candidate will seek to strengthen traditional Social Security and Medicare for the future?

- What are the candidate's thoughts concerning families, children and education in this country?

- Which candidate believes in defined benefits pensions (ours) rather than pensions with defined contributions?

- Which candidate has the ability to unify Americans, not alienate them, in a divided country, displaying a temperament to make reasoned decisions?

- Which candidate is a problem solver, seeking solutions as well as identifying problems?

- Which candidate has given specific plans, either in speeches or on a website, to implement ideas, rather than spouting empty promises?

- Which candidate will try to fix the unfair tax code to have the wealthy give their fair share in taxes?

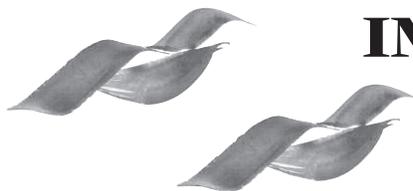
- Which candidate will appoint judges to the Supreme Court who care about the middle class and those groups who have been marginalized?

There are so many more questions to ask to reflect your choice by investigating the issues. You must vote and encourage everyone you know to do the same. Once again, be sure you are registered to vote. Once you are in the voting cubicle/booth, you are exercising your right and power as a citizen. Feel that power! Embrace it! VOTE! The more people who vote, the more we can say with pride, "This is what democracy looks like!"

## Alert: New Medicare Notice Law

Many seniors have had the experience of being in a hospital and then receiving an unexpected bill for the hospital services. Only when they questioned the bill were they informed that while in the hospital their status was listed as "under observation." There have been instances when patients have been under observation for a number of days. By Medicare rules, services provided while "under observation" are billed according to the Out Patient fee schedule. Had the patient been admitted and given the status of "inpatient," Medicare would have covered the expenses. The financial impact has been devastating for many seniors. A number of senior advocacy groups have been petitioning Congress to address the issue. In response, on March 16, 2015, Congress passed the Notice Act. Under the Medicare Notice Act, hospitals are required to give notice to "each individual who receives observation services as an outpatient" at a hospital for more than 24 hours.

The law took effect on August 6, 2016, but actual notices are not expected to be given until January 2017. The "under observation" status has even greater financial implications for those who are transferred from a hospital to a skilled nursing home (especially for rehabilitation). Medicare will pay nursing home costs only if the patient has had three consecutive days in the hospital as an inpatient. If the patient is transferred while having the "observation" status, s/he would be liable for the entire nursing home bill. Congress has yet to address this loophole in nursing home coverage. There is a proposal that would allow days spent under observation to count toward the three day requirement, but that bill is only in its planning stages. At this moment, to avoid unexpected and sometimes financially devastating bills, each patient needs to know her/his hospital status: inpatient or observation.



# IN MEMORIAM

*Barry Schneider*  
SPOUSE OF BETH SCHNEIDER



*Henry Kelly*  
SOUTH JUNIOR

*Elizabeth (Betty)  
Schweitzer*  
SOUTH JUNIOR

*Dorothy Wylie*  
LAKEVILLE



## Mark Your Calendar:

Monday, August 31, 2016  
Thursday, September 22, 2016  
Thursday, October 6, 2016  
Sunday, October 16, 2016  
Thursday, December 15, 2016

REC membership fees are due  
REC Fall Luncheon, Jolly Fisherman  
NYSUT Regional Conference, Woodbury CC  
NYSUT Breast Cancer Walk, Jones Beach  
REC Holiday Luncheon, Westbury Manor

### *Cont'd from pg 1*

The second way to amend the Constitution is by convention which works very differently. This time the question of a convention will be asked in an "off" election year - November 2017 when there is no presidential or legislative election. Should voters approve a convention, the process begins. Three delegates per-state senate district and 15 at-large delegates would be elected at the next general election, November 2018. Since there are 63 senate districts, 189 delegates plus the 15 will be elected. A total of 204 delegates will have the responsibility and authority to propose amendments to any part of the Constitution. Despite much past criticism of the delegate selection process, no reform has been done, so incumbent lawmakers are in a position to become the delegates who rewrite the constitution under which they have been governing. Once elected, convention delegates meet in Albany the following April for an unspecified duration, to deliberate and then put the amendments on the November 2019 ballot. (Just some more historical info: at the 1966 convention, 186 delegates met from April 4 - September 26, 1966. The sitting state assembly speaker chaired the convention. The cost of the 1967 convention was \$6.5 million. Estimates for a 2018 convention are much higher. In the end, all the proposed amendments were defeated by the voters just as they were in 1915.)

The NYS Constitution covers a wide range of citizen rights, rules of governance for executive, legislative and judicial branches and for education, finance, taxation and much, much more. Within the document, there are significant guarantees for those working in the public sector. Important rights delineated in the NYS Constitution include: the right to a free public education; a prohibition on reducing public pension benefits; a person's right to worker compensation; the right to belong to a union and bargain collectively; a requirement the state provide for social welfare needs. All these guarantees would be open to the review of a convention and a possible rewrite or elimination. In 2013, over 3 million voters had their say on proposed amendments and approved 5 of the 6 amendments. Legislators and the governor already have a proven means to amend the NYS Constitution: offer individual amendments to voters and let the millions of New Yorkers decide, not 204 delegates whose selection procession has never been reformed despite the controversy that has historically surrounded it.

*While the vote will not take place until November 2017, The Ties will continue to provide members with the information needed to make an informed decision.*

## A REC 'Surprise' Luncheon Location

May 18, late afternoon, found us ready for our REC Swan Club luncheon the next day. Menu was set, seating arranged and directions provided. Then, President Toto called with the jarring news that the Swan Club would be closed on the 19th as mandated by the Board of Health! With the assistance of Swan Club personnel, a new venue was found at the Crest Hollow Country Club. Volunteers reached all who had indicated they were coming. Happily, all but two members made the new location and, with several add-ins, fifty-five of us enjoyed the festivities!

At our business meeting, President Toto and other officers brought us up-to-date on current affairs. We are financially strong, slowly improving our VOTE-COPE support and will have lower Benefit Trust Retiree rates for next year thanks to Maureen Newman's advocacy and the support of the Executive Board. During lunch, we presented Carol Gabia and her son, Thomas, a clock/plaque to honor past-president Leon Gabia for his many years of dedicated service to the Great Neck Teachers Association's Retired Educators Chapter. We also recognized Sheila Henchy, retiring GNTA President, for her many contributions to our REC and the teaching profession during her years of service.

Our luncheon speaker was Matt Jacobs, Staff Director from the Nassau NYSUT Office. He spoke about the implications of calling for a NYS Constitutional Convention on the ballot in November 2017. That presentation prompted our front page article which provides important information and history of NYS Constitutional Conventions.

The next REC gathering will again be at the Jolly Fishermen and Steak House, 25 Main St, Roslyn on Thursday, September 22nd. We will have another excellent speaker, Jeff Grabelsky, from Cornell University. Make this next meeting the one that you come and visit with us!

Reminder: Have you sent in your membership renewal? Your update for *Ties that Bind*?



1. Elaine Sobel, Ellen Vigneaux; 2. Don Barry, Paul Rafuse; 3. Nancy Chauvin, Barbara Berkowitz; 4. Marie Sacco, Vicki Merten; 5. Geri Pentecost, Jimmy Econ; 6. Tony McQuade, Bob Abrams, Jane Alwais, Shelly Stern, Sue Miller, Maureen Mileta; 7. Shelly Stern; 8. Nancy Barry, Carl Ring, Nancy Jacobson;



9. Bill Toto, Carol Gabia, Tom Gabia; 10. Matt Jacobs; 11. Gil Blum, Sondra Blum, Joyce O'Connor; 12. Eileen McCarthy, Barbara Raber; 13. Rose Grabelsky, Arlene Donowitz; 14. Bill Toto, Barbara Berkowitz; 15. Bill Toto, Sheila Henchy; 16. Penny Metsch, Dorothy Zuckerman, Karlene Reilly.

# *Fall Luncheon & Meeting*

**Thursday, September 22nd, 2016**

**The Jolly Fisherman & Steak House**

**25 Main St, Roslyn, NY 11576 • 516-621-0055**

**10:45 Registration • 11:15 General Meeting**

**12:00 Social Hour: Cash Bar & Hors d'oeuvres • 12:30 Lunch**

*Appetizer Choice:* Fresh Fruit Cocktail or Manhattan Clam Chowder or Soup du Jour. Jolly Fisherman Salad. *Entree Choice:* Atlantic Salmon Baked in a Macadamia Nut Crust (or simply broiled) or Imported Orange Roughy Almondine or Sliced Brisket of Beef with Gravy or Boneless Breast of Chicken Saute a la Francaise. Entrees served with Duchess Potato & Chef's Vegetable. *Dessert Choice:* Fruit Cobbler with Fresh Whipped Cream or Chocolate Mousse Cake or Classic Rice Pudding. *Beverages:* Unlimited sodas, coffee and tea.

*Guest Speaker:* Jeff Grabelsky, Assoc. Director, Cornell Univ. School of Industrial & Labor Relations  
*Topic:* Labor's Challenge, Rising Inequality and the Politics of Division in America Today.

## **September 22nd, 2016 Fall Luncheon Reservation**

Enclosed is my check for \$45 \_\_\_\_\_ for \_\_\_\_\_ person(s).

Name \_\_\_\_\_

School \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

Guest(s) name(s) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Make a check payable to GNTA/REC for \$45 per person and send it with the form by Sept. 13th to:  
**Bill Ryall, 318 Rushmore Ave.,  
 Carle Place, NY 11514**

Cancellation requests must be made to Bill by Sept. 18th, @ 516-333-9423

*Rose Grabelsky  
 Program Chair*