



THE NYSRSAS ENDORSEMENT PROCESS

Eugene Goldwasser



We conducted our first member survey several years ago. At that time, a significant number of you recommended that NYSRSAS take positions on specific issues affecting retirees and endorse candidates for office who supported those issues and concerns that retirees favored.

The mid-term elections this November provide an opportunity for Democratic and Republican candidates to state their cases before the voters. It is an important election as all 438 members of the House of Representatives are up for election as well as a significant number of senators. The results of this election could see one or both houses change their majorities.

Therefore, we embarked on a process to assess the candidates running for congressional seats in districts 1, 2 3 and 4 on Long Island as well as statewide races for governor, attorney-general and comptroller.

We focused our concerns on the issues we identified. Specifically, we wanted to know if the candidates supported the continuation of Medicare in its present form, if they were open to allowing Medicare to negotiate prescription drug prices, if they supported Social Security in its present form, if they supported increasing the cap on withholding taxes to insure its solvency.

We wanted to know the candidates' positions on gun control: if they supported universal background checks for all gun sales, if they were in favor of prohibiting the sales of guns to people on Federal Watch Lists, and how they felt about the arming and training of teachers and administrators in the handling of guns on school grounds. You can find the complete list of questions on our website if you click on the "Issues" box on the home page.

The endorsement subcommittee met in July to

develop the questions, and teams were established to assess each of the candidates. The teams made their recommendations at the Executive Board meeting on September 12, 2018, and decisions were made regarding our endorsements, which you'll find on page 3 of this newsletter.

The Member Survey

In January, 2018, you received a member survey requesting your input to guide your Executive Board in focusing on issues and concerns you felt were important and on which you felt this association should focus. It was gratifying to read the 187 responses and to learn on which areas we should concentrate our efforts. The endorsement process and the questions we developed represent your recommendations. Others, such as current trends in education as well as a seminar on current issues, will be considered for focus groups this year.

Your Executive Board

The NYSRSAS Executive Board is composed of 20 members (see roster of Executive Board members on page 2) who meet four times each year in a formal business meeting to discuss issues and concerns and to plan focus groups for the membership at large. Several focus groups are planned each year. Our first will occur on November 14, which will initiate a review of the NYSRSAS Constitution to make sure it is up to date, relevant, and reflects the needs of the organization.

If you would like to attend one of the Executive Board meetings, or become a member of the Executive Board, just e-mail info@nysrsas.org and we'll send you the meeting dates so you can attend. All are welcome.

Gene Goldwasser served as principal of several NYS elementary schools. Since his retirement, he has been an adjunct professor at Hofstra, a coach with the Institute for Student Achievement and president of NYSRSAS.

ANNUAL LUNCHEON – JUNE 2018

The annual luncheon in June featured an informative review of the impact of tax laws for retirees by Anthony Spatafore, President of Capital Advisors Inc. Mr. Spatafore noted some of the negative aspects of the new federal tax law such as the cap of \$10,000 on state and local tax deductions. He also presented helpful insights for managing investments. For example, those over the age of 70 ½ taking the required minimum deduction (RMD) from an IRA or 403(b) tax sheltered investment may directly give all or some of the deduction to a charitable organization without any tax impact. This regulation may permit the investor to remain in a lower tax category while giving the charity additional support.

Check Our Web Page!
<http://nysrsas.org>

NYSRSAS

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We welcome your comments on articles or current issues. To start a discussion, contact us at

info@nysrsas.org

MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS

Always identify yourself as a NYSRSAS Member whenever using the following benefits.



VPS Vision Care

Eye exams and glasses—vsp.com
 877-759-5758

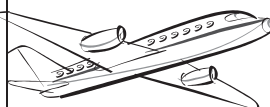
auto-price-finder.com & truecar.com

Get a free price quote on the make and model of the vehicle you want.



Car Rentals.

- **Avis Worldwide** 800-352-7900,
 Rate code AWD S 061700.
 (if trouble with discount code, call 800-831-8000)
- **Alamo** 800-354-2322.
 Discount rate code 706768.



Southwest Airlines

800-435-9792
 (20-50% discounts
 for travelers over age 65)

Eastern Dental Plan [EDP]

This is a discounted dental program.

Phone 631-272-5230

Identify yourself as a NYSRSAS member for best discount rates. Select from hundreds of dentists on Long Island.

Also: vision plan, pet discount drugs, hearing plan.



United Health Programs of America

Identify yourself as a NYSRSAS member for dental and chiropractic rates.

Hugh Marasa, one of our members, is one of their agents. Ask for him.

Phone UHP—800-238-3884

For additional hints for discounts in other areas, visit our website:

<http://nysrsas.org/benefits>

Executive Board Meeting Dates

Members are welcome to attend our meetings. They begin at 10:00 a.m. and will be held at the Western Suffolk BOCES offices, 31 Lee Avenue, Wheatley Heights, NY 11798 on :

Wednesday, December 12

Wednesday, April 10

Wednesday, June 12

If you are able to join us, please call 631-761-5451 so we can arrange for seating.

NYSRSAS ENDORSES . . .



New York State Offices

Governor—Andrew Cuomo (D)

Lt. Governor – Kathy Hochul (D)

Attorney General – Letitia James (D)

Comptroller – Thomas P. DiNapoli (D)

Federal Offices

Senate—Kristin Gillibrand (D)

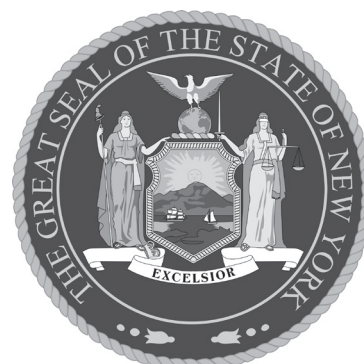
House of Representatives

District #1 – Perry Gershon (D)

District #2 – Peter King (R)

District #3 – Thomas Suozzi (D)

District #4 - Kathleen Rice (D)



FROM THE DESK OF: *The Reflective Retiree* Corine Lipset-Huberman
PARAPROSDOKIAN . . . WHAT IN THE WORLD IS THAT?

Some time ago, a friend sent me a list of paraprozdokians. I had to look up the definition. Here is what I found: *“Figure of speech in which the latter part of a sentence or phrase is surprising or unexpected; frequently used in a humorous situation.” Example: “Where there is a will, I want to be in it.”*

Hoarder that I am, the list sat in a file marked “maybe sometime.” I came across said list last week and said “hmmm”—many of these paraprozdokians would really apply to the status of our country’s politics and the men and women who are responsible for leading this country, those currently in power and those not. So here they are; what do you think?

Evening news is where they begin with ‘Good Evening,’ and then proceed to tell you why it isn’t.

The last thing I want to do is hurt you. But it’s still

on my list.

Light travels faster than sound. This is why some people appear bright until you hear them speak.

We never really grow up, we only learn how to act in public.

War does not determine who is right - - only who is left. If I agreed with you, we’d both be wrong.

A bus station is where a bus stops. A train station is where a train stops. On my desk, I have a work station.

I didn’t say it was your fault, I said I was blaming you.

A clear conscience is the sign of a fuzzy memory.

You do not need a parachute to skydive. You only need a parachute to skydive twice.

I used to be indecisive. Now I’m not so sure.

You’re never too old to learn something stupid.

To be sure of hitting the target, shoot first and call whatever you hit the target.

A diplomat is someone who tells you to go to hell in such a way that you look forward to the trip.

WHAT'S AHEAD FOR TEACHERS' OR ADMINISTRATORS' UNIONS? THE IMPACT OF THE JANUS DECISION (As reported in Education Week of June 29, 2018.)

Ken Forman

After the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in *Janus v. American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees Council 31* against public-employee unions, questions about what this will mean for the future of public sector unions are unanswered. The ruling declared that "agency" fees, which public-sector unions had been charging to nonmembers to cover the cost of collective bargaining, were unconstitutional. The court also ruled that employees need to opt into union membership—rather than having to opt out.

Education Week described a recent study about teacher union agency fees in Michigan and Wisconsin by Bradley Marianno, of the University of Nevada-Las Vegas. He reported that fees were already unlawful in 28 states and since 2011, six states switched to right-to-work laws. Wisconsin switched for teachers in 2011, and Michigan switched in 2012 for all employees. With the cost of fair-share fees at about 70-80% of full union membership, Marianno reported teachers are making that cost calculation and deciding to resign their membership. He found that union membership had been cut by about half. It's not especially easy to resign membership, but the court's decision went a step further—now requiring public-sector union employees to opt **into** membership in the union. Additionally, Michigan enacted a law in 2012, along with the right-to-work package, that prohibits paycheck deduction. Union leaders indicated that this proved even more negative than the right-to-work legislation, because now teachers had to opt **into** deductions for membership.

Teachers' unions are adapting. You'd expect as membership declines, and unions are collecting less revenue from dues, that they'd be less politically active, having less money to allocate. However, Marianno saw teachers' unions in Wisconsin increase their contributions to political candidates. He reported that the California Teachers Association, despite making budget cuts of \$20 million, still allocated more money to political contributions.

Marianno indicated that it's unclear how im-

plementation will take place in each state. There are some states legislating to make it easier for unions to reach members and get that opt in. For example, California is considering a bill in the legislature that requires the opportunity for teachers' unions to give a presentation at new employee orientations. New York has enacted similar legislation recently. The researcher concluded that teachers' unions will be pushing for such legislation to help facilitate this opt-in membership, to reach out to new members, and to try to retain employees.

In most cases, if a union becomes certified, it gains exclusive representation for an employee group, requiring it to represent all employees at the collective-bargaining table as well as in grievance proceedings. Should unions be required to represent employees who essentially are not paying for those services? That's going to vary by state law. For example, in California unions are certified until the employees decertify them. On the other hand, other states like Wisconsin, require unions to recertify every year, so you can imagine the difficulty teachers' unions will have.

Another issue is that unions no longer feel they should represent nonmembers. That opens a whole other can of worms with the possibility of a plethora of different labor organizations representing different factions of teachers.

Marianno hasn't seen any evidence of dues increases to offset the loss in revenue, but what could result is a problem for collective action if adversarial relationships arise within the union with teachers resenting working in a school with a colleague who's deriving benefits from a contract but not paying dues.

States are taking various approaches to deal with this issue. Some governors say, "we stand by our unions." A state like California essentially is providing more protections to unions, but other states could implement laws like the Michigan restriction on payroll deductions which would only make it more difficult for unions to attract and retain membership. Marianno

(continued on page 6)

HOMEWORK OR NO HOMEWORK

Mary Hance

Shel Silverstein’s poem “Homework” with the first two lines stating “Homework, oh homework! I hate you, you stink!” was probably meant to be spoken by a school-age child. However, in today’s climate of whether a student should get homework, these words could be spoken by a parent.

With the school year underway, the conversation of whether students should be given homework or not will be discussed by teachers in their faculty rooms and parents on the soccer and football fields. The Long Beach School District in Nassau County, New York, has eliminated homework for students in grades kindergarten to fifth grade for the coming school year. The district in a letter to parents in June stated that homework was being eliminated in order to encourage the students to read more, play and wonder.

As I posed this question to parents and educators who are my friends, I found that those who are parents would like to see homework eliminated so their children would have more free time to play and pursue other activities. The educators I spoke to feel that homework is necessary to reinforce the day’s lessons, but should be relevant and meaningful. One kindergarten teacher I spoke to said that she had researched the subject of homework over the summer and intends to make the assignments more relevant to her students. One example she gave me was instead of having her students completing a math sheet on counting, she will ask them to count the number of rooms or the number of doors in their homes. This will reinforce the concept of counting and be fun for her students.

Harris Cooper, a psychology and neuroscience professor at Duke University has studied the effects of homework for over 30 years. He feels that homework is necessary and should be reasonable to promote success for the students. Professor Cooper believes that homework enforces the idea that we are all lifelong learners and supports independence, time management and improves study skills.



Educators are also concerned that if homework is eliminated in elementary school, the students will not have the skills necessary to be successful when homework is assigned in middle and high school. Students need to accept the responsibility to complete the assignments, they need to learn how to budget time and how to study independently. If these skills are not honed early in life, how will the students be able to function in the employment world? There they might be required to get a project done on a timeline and not “when you feel like completing it” or be assigned two projects at the same time with the same deadlines.



Other questions arise regarding how the students will really spend the “free” time afforded to them with the elimination of homework. Will the students really do more reading? Will they spend more time exploring their worlds? Will they go outside and play more and engage in more physical activities? With the advancement of technology, many students spend their “free” time on computers, iPhones, and iPads playing games or watching videos. As a former elementary principal I often asked my students what they did over the breaks

we had in the school year. Not too many students spoke of reading or playing outside. If they were not in an organized activity, they spent much of their time involved with technology. A report by CNN in October 2017 stated that children under the age of eight spend two hours and nineteen minutes with screen media and only about 30 minutes reading or being read to by someone. If they have two hours to use media, why are they not engaged in more play, more wondering and/or more reading?



Mary Hance retired as the principal of the Woodland Avenue School in Hicksville, NY. A recent addition to the NYSRSAS Executive Board, she is now serving as chair of our Education Committee.

MESSAGE FROM A NEW RETIREE

Seth Weitzman

In the August issue, I described standing at the precipice of retirement: the office packed up, 27th and final graduation ceremony as a middle school principal completed, inbox at long last empty. Standing at the precipice, I promised to share with fellow retirees the great leap forward. Whether you retired recently or decades ago, I'm interested in your experiences too. My email address is:

sethweitzman@yahoo.com.

"Beware the rocks below!" was the typical warning dispensed from friends and colleagues concerned about the jump. There were cautionary tales of retirees becoming achingly bored and clinically depressed. "Better keep busy, especially the day school reopens" was a common refrain. There was a surprisingly cautious tone underlying all the well-intentioned advice, exacerbating my feeling of nervousness anticipating the dramatic change ahead.

Ten weeks later, how is retirement going? In response, I can hear my old-world grandmother commenting, "What's not to like?"



- The best part is enjoying breakfast sitting at an actual table (not a school administrator's meal standing up or behind a desk), slowly sipping morning coffee while perusing the newspaper, checking the box score of my favorite baseball team, and tackling the daily crossword puzzle.

- My calendar regularly features meals shared with friends, and attending a speaker series at the 92nd Street Y and concerts. (I confess watching 85 year-old Willie Nelson perform spurred some post-retirement guilt.)
- With my wife still working, I resolved to even the score cooking dinner, which stood at 5,200 to 3.
 #AnyoneHaveEasyRecipes?
 #GoodThingSheDoesntKeepScore
- Returning to the long-past teaching phase of my career, I'm planning lessons once again, preparing to teach a graduate school educational leadership class in the fall.
- An ongoing project has been distance training on my bicycle and learning the history of the Erie Ca-

nal before I bike the length of the canal in October.

Although my retirement is still in its infancy, there are a few lessons I have already learned. At the outset I found myself lazing days away, or conversely, working continuously without so much as a weekend break. I discovered you must structure your time. I've been attempting to take off long weekends. I confine eating breakfast, reading the newspaper, and exercising to the early morning, leaving a large chunk of the day to prepare lesson plans or do yard work.

I've learned I need to identify and focus on activities I enjoy. Leisure time, as sociologists call it, is wonderful. But retirement requires self-understanding to take advantage of the gift of time. Many travel or volunteer. I know a retiree who began performing stand-up in New York City comedy clubs. Another learned to play the guitar. If I were to give advice to a new cadre of retirees, I'd invoke Socrates' "Know thyself," or at least know how to spend your time in order to feel gratified.

The most important lesson I've gleaned from my leap off the precipice sounds corny and clichéd. Nervous the changes ahead might lead to crashing against rocks below, instead I've learned that retirement offers the opportunity to fly. Those other clichés about starting the next chapter or a new phase in life ring true. After a year listening to worrisome advice and feeling apprehension, it feels good to know retirement will be alright.

Seth Weitzman retired as the principal of Hommocks Middle School in Mamaroneck, NY. Prior to that, he was the principal of Herricks Middle School in New Hyde Park, NY.

JANUS DECISION *(cont'd from p. 4)*

has seen six strikes in states across the nation recently—primarily right to work states. He further predicts that unions will have to demonstrate a stronger political voice to influence state legislation in their favor and to show members that they are valuable.

Kenneth Forman, Ph.D, has had extensive experience as an administrator in various New York public school systems. He currently serves as an adjunct professor in the Educational Leadership program at Stony Brook University.

QUARTERLY QUERY – SUMMER 2018

Our summer query “What is the one thing that bothers you the most, makes you cra-z-z-z-y” prompted these responses:

I have had this pet peeve for years. It drives me absolutely crazy when highway traffic backs up for miles because drivers slow down to watch an accident on the other side of the road. **Edward Bellomo**

People who are on the phone in the car and fail to move when the traffic light turns green makes me nuts. People on phones walking down the street bumping into me is equally annoying. I think cell phones should be banned! **Edward Price**

Loving languages as I do, the way many today turn nouns into verbs makes me a little crazy. We hear, for example: “he will be orientated” instead of “there will be an orientation” or “he will orient himself.” Similarly, I go NUTS when an announcer on my favorite classical music station invites me to “take a listen” to a piece of music, turning the verb into a noun. I’m happy to listen attentively but when I hear “take a listen” I’m reminded of a VERY informal way to describe one of our private bodily functions! **Pat Galaskas**

*Well, there are several things that bother me. I’m really annoyed when I’m in a restaurant and the person cleaning up a table clatters dirty dishes into a bin adjacent to other diners. I’m also annoyed when the person sitting next to me on a plane adds garlic powder to their carry-on pizza. But my all-time pet peeve is when someone goes on and on about **their** pet peeves. You see, I only state mine when asked!* **Marty Mandelker**

A SPECIAL FILM FOR SENIORS

Lives Well Lived: Celebrating the Secrets, Wit and Wisdom of Age is a documentary celebrating adults 75 to 100 years old who live life to the fullest. With over 3,000 years of experience, 40 people share their secrets and insights. Their personal stories will make you laugh, perhaps cry, but mostly inspire you. The film has won many awards and has been featured in theaters across the country and abroad.

The film will be shown on October 30, 2018 at the Carole Zabar Center, Marlene Meyerson JCC, Manhattan, NY, with filmmaker Sky Bergman present for a Q&A following the film. For show time and ticket information call (646) 505-5700.



Quarterly Query



AUTUMN 2018

Think back to when your children were little – or when you were spending time with your grandchildren. Over the years there must have been a precocious saying, a memorable response or a cute story you recall. Most of us remember Art Linkletter’s program, with a segment called “Kids Say the Darndest Things,” and how popular that program was with the American public. So, c’mon folks, write in and share something with us.

I’ll start off by telling you my story about my son, hoping it gives you a chuckle.

When my son, born and living on Long Island, was about 4 years old (he’s now 57), we took him into NYC. He trudged along the city streets, holding my hand. After a bit, he stopped and looked up at me. “There’s sure a lot of cracks in this patio,” he said.

A true child of the suburbs!

e-mail your response to info@nysrsas.org.

(Please include your name and the district from which you retired.)

We hope to hear from you.

PORT CITY PONDERINGS

(cont’d from page 8)

Salut d’Amour for violin and piano and the lovely *Enigma Variations* for orchestra. Here in Wilmington we are fortunate to have a sister station to our regular NPR station which plays classical music of every genre 24 hours a day every day of the week, with hosts who give background for both the music played and their composers. Each day the music of Elgar and others continues to fill me with peace and joy. Thank you, WHQR!

**Elgar composed six separate works entitled *Pomp and Circumstance*.*

A former editor of the NYSRSAS Newsletter, Joe Marchese received his Ph.D degree from St. John’s University. He retired as Assistant Principal of Half Hollow Hills H.S East.

PORT CITY PONDERINGS

Joe Marchese



Fair warning! I am about to present and discuss a topic that may appall or upset you. It is not, however, concerned with politics, religion or sexual orientation (collective sighs of relief). My annoyance *du jour* is with the ubiquitous use of Sir Edward Elgar's *Pomp and Circumstance No.1**

as the processional at graduation exercises. Unfortunately, what one usually hears at graduations is only the Trio, or middle portion, of that work. That melody, with appropriate lyrics, has become a patriotic anthem in England, "*Land of Hope and Glory*," which is traditionally sung at the final evening of a series of concerts called Last Night of the Proms. I doubt that most people who have ever attended a graduation ceremony in the United States have even heard the beginning or ending portions of the work which are more spirited and vibrant, or would recognize them if they had.

It is interesting to note that the Trio section was first performed at a graduation ceremony in the United States in 1905 when Yale University conferred an honorary doctorate of music on Elgar. However, it was not played as the processional but as the recessional when graduates and university officials marched out at the end of the ceremony.

My irritation with *Pomp and Circumstance*, at least the part usually performed at graduations, is its rather dispassionate melody, played over and over again, especially when the graduation class

consists of multiple hundreds or even thousands of students. The music accompanying the opening processional with students and faculty wearing their academic regalia should illustrate distinction and grandeur celebrating the academic accomplishments of the graduates.

What, then, would I suggest as a replacement? I offer two suggestions. The first is the Overture to Richard Wagner's *Die Meistersinger*. The late Frank Malzone, who served as music teacher and band director at Half Hollow Hills High School for many years, always used a concert band version of this work as the graduation processional. Its majestic soaring melody highlighted by the Wagnerian brass is a stately introduction to an academic celebration. The second is *Crown Imperial* by Sir William Walton who composed this march in 1936 for the coronation of King George VI in 1937. Elgar had died in 1934, and so Walton, who was considered by many a successor to Elgar as the most prominent English composer at the time, was chosen for the job.

It is unfortunate that all most people know of Sir Edward Elgar and his music is the graduation *Pomp and Circumstance*. During a career extending from 1872 to his death in 1934, he composed more than 140 published works encompassing music in many forms – songs, choral works (both religious and secular), sonatas, suites, symphonies, concertos. Among my favorites are the exquisitely beautiful

(continued on page 7)



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