

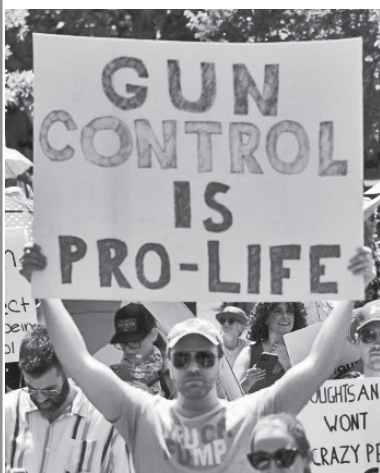


BIPARTISAN SAFER COMMUNITIES ACT – A STEP IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION?

Eugene Goldwasser

At the writing of this piece, the Senate passed the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act by a vote of 65-33. The bill was then passed by the house and signed into law by the president. This is the first piece of legislation in decades to address gun safety and responsibility. According to proponents of the bill, it will:

- Enhance background checks for prospective gun buyers under 21 years old
- Close the “boyfriend loophole”
- Clarify the definition of a Federally Licensed Firearms Dealer
- Create criminal penalties for straw purchases (when a firearm is bought by one person on behalf of another) and gun trafficking
- Provide \$70 million in grants to incentivize states to implement state crisis intervention programs and provides billions of dollars in federal funding to bolster mental health services for children and families, and harden schools (add police officers to patrol schools, arm teachers and administrators, and make schools less porous to visitors)



The legislation had the support of both the majority and minority leaders in the Senate as well as a total of 15 Republican Senators, which made it filibuster proof. Additionally, 14 Republican members of the House voted for the bill making it a bi-

partisan piece of legislation.

Does the proposed legislation go far enough? What did the Senate negotiators leave out? Here are several proposals that have not made it into the version agreed to by the bipartisan group in the Senate: Raising the minimum age to purchase certain guns to 21, expanding background checks to cover private sales, encouraging safe gun storage and punishing people who fail to secure guns from children and criminals, banning the sale of large-capacity magazines, expanding red-flag laws to remove guns from people in crisis, and banning assault-type weapons.

The actor, Matthew McConaughey, in an op-ed appearing in the Austin American-Statesman, addressed gun safety issues. He said “gun responsibility is a duty that will preserve it [gun ownership]. There is no constitutional barrier to gun responsibility. Keeping firearms out of the hands of dangerous people is not only the responsible thing to do, it is the best way to protect the Second Amendment.” He offered four suggestions: “All gun purchases should require a background check. Unless you are in the military, you should be 21 years old to purchase an assault rifle.” He went on to advocate for “red flag laws” and a “national waiting period for assault rifles.”

Despite the positive actions being taken by members of the Senate as well as celebrities weighing in on the issue, on Thursday, June 23, 2022, the Supreme Court by a vote of 6-3 struck down a New York gun law thereby making it easier for millions of Americans (Cont’d on page 3)



FROM THE DESK OF: *The Reflective Retiree*

THANKS . . . BUT NO THANKS!

Corine Lipset-Huberman



The Bipartisan Safer Communities Act is legislation that addresses gun safety. It is a welcome piece of legislation, long overdue in its arrival, although it certainly omits several key aspects of items like banning assault weapons and raising the minimum age to purchase *any* weapon to 21. It does, however, provide a piece of legislation that almost all educators do *not* want – the arming of teachers and administrators, as cited in the last section of the bill, which “. . . provides billions of dollars in federal funding to bolster mental health services for children and families, and harden schools (add police officers to patrol schools, arm teachers and administrators, and make schools less porous to visitors).”

Martin Mandelker, our Publicity Chairperson, wrote in an article entitled “A Pistol Packin’ Principal Isn’t the Answer,” published in *Newsday* in 2012:

I spent 12 years as the unarmed principal of an elementary school in Syosset before retiring in 2006. After the Connecticut school massacre, I asked myself what I would have done if I’d heard a loud bang that I believed to be gunfire.

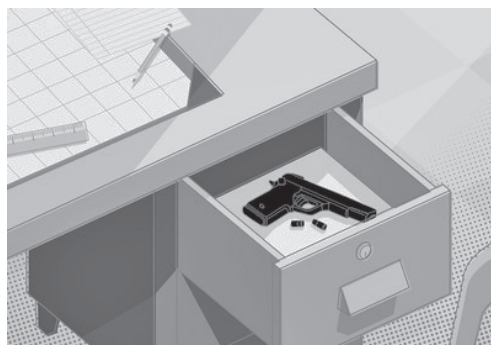
I envisioned myself unlocking a drawer or metal box containing a loaded gun, quickly announcing a school lockdown via the loud-speaker, yelling at the office staff to call 911, releasing the gun’s safety and dashing into the hallway to engage a crazed intruder in a firefight.

Although not a gambler, I’d put my money on the crazed guy with a semiautomatic to win this fight

All the major education organizations concur that arming school personnel is a bad idea. In 2018, then President Lily Eskelsen Garcia of the NEA said, “The idea of arming teachers is ill-conceived, preposterous, and dangerous.” Simi-

larly, President Andy Pallotta of NYSUT stated, “Arming teachers will not make schools safer. Schools must remain sanctuaries for learning and places where parents and the community know that their children are safe. It is misguided to think . . . that more guns in a school – in the presence of children, and in the hands of educators who don’t want them – is an answer.”

Several years later, in May 2022, following the killing of 19 students and two teachers in Uvalde, Texas, NEA President Becky Pringle issued the same warning.



“Bringing more guns into schools makes schools more dangerous and does nothing to shield our students and educators from gun violence. We need fewer guns in schools, not more.” Randi Weingarten, President of AFT, expressed similar feelings. “The answer to gun violence is not ‘more guns.’ No amount of training can prepare a teacher to go up against an AR-15. An educator’s job is to educate.”

Despite opposition from education organizations and school security experts, there is increasing support for arming teachers and administrators. Ohio and Louisiana are considering measures that would allow teachers and other school staff to carry guns. Texas already permits teachers to be armed. Texas Attorney-General Ken Paxton stated on FOX NEWS following the Uvalde school shooting that Texas should go further to ensure that its school employees have firearms.

It is likely that dissension between these two points of view will increase. *(cont’d on page 3)*

SAFER COMMUNITIES ACT
(cont'd from page 1)

to arm themselves in public. In his dissent, Justice Breyer stated, "Many states have tried to address some of the dangers of gun violence . . . by passing laws that limit, in various ways, who may purchase, carry, or use firearms of different kinds. The court today severely burdens states' efforts to do so."



In another action, the Court also voted to overturn Roe v. Wade. Roe had guaranteed access to abortion and a woman's right to choose. There are 13 states with "trigger" laws that are set to ban abortion and 26 states that are likely to ban it now that Roe has been overturned. It's been a big week for the Supreme court.

One step forward, two steps back.

NYSRSAS President, Gene Goldwasser, was a school principal for 24 years. He has served as a Hofstra adjunct professor and as a coach with the Institute for Student Achievement.

ELECTION RESULTS
JUNE 2022

NYSRSAS officers for 2022-2025 are:

- Eugene T. Goldwasser, President**
- Patricia Galaskas, First Vice-President**
- Kenneth Forman, Second Vice-President**
- Sherry Alessandro, Recording Secretary**
- Edward Price, Treasurer**

2022—2023 Executive Board Meetings will be held on:

- September 15, 2022
- December 15, 2022
- March 16, 2023
- June 15, 2023

The September meeting will be via ZOOM. If you would like to participate, please email ejgoldwasser@optonline.net for the ZOOM meeting link.

THANKS . . . BUT NO THANKS!
(cont'd from page 2)

What will the future bring, given that some gun safety measures will now come into play? Will Marksmanship 101 be part of a teacher training course in the future? Will administrators have to show their administrator's license and gun license when applying for a position as principal?

We shall see!

Dr. Corine Lipset-Huberman has had experience at all levels of education. She spent the last 19 years prior to retirement as principal of the Village Elementary School in the Syosset Central School District.

NYSRSAS CITIZENSHIP AWARD

After the January 6th insurrection, in order to reinforce the values of good citizenship and democratic government, NYSRSAS decided to offer a Citizenship Award Certificate along with a check for \$100 to 11th grade students from selected Long Island high schools. Students were nominated by their principals (with input from their teachers and guidance counselor) based on criteria related to their demonstration of civic participation and their efforts that reflected concern for their school, community and fellow students.

The 2022 award-winners are students with impressive contributions to their school and community. They represented the following nine schools:

- Bellport High School,*
- Central Islip High School,*
- Copague High School,*
- Freeport High School,*
- Greenport High School,*
- Hampton Bays High School,*
- Roosevelt High School,*
- Westbury High School*
- Wyandanch High School*

We plan to continue this award program in the 2022-23 school year. It is funded by donations from our NYSRSAS Executive Board and members. If anyone wishes to contribute to the program, please send your check made out to NYSRSAS to Edward Price, Treasurer, at 31 Walters Avenue, Cold Spring Harbor, NY 11724.

SPRING QUARTERLY QUERY—CONGRESSIONAL TERM LIMITS

Should there be a limit on the number of times one can be re-elected to the Senate or the House of Representatives?

According to a poll conducted by McLaughlin and Associates in March, 2021, 82% of Americans, including Democrats, Republicans and Independents, are in favor of term limits for members of Congress.

Congress has an approval rating of 20%, yet historically 90% win re-election. Why is this? Members of Congress are allowed to send out millions of letters to their constituents at taxpayer expense. Incumbent members of Congress build up campaign chests that discourage serious challengers from even running. They can steer pet projects (pork) toward their states and districts. Members of Congress may engage in outside employment (subject to restrictions as outlined in the *House Ethics Manual*), thus supplementing their income.

The 'Congressional Incumbents Club' is a paradigm of careerism, combining power, stature and influence with lavish benefits: a high salary, unparalleled business conditions, limited work days, spectacular working conditions, periodic taxpayer-funded fact-finding trips, a sizable staff (that can include family members), exceptional medical, dental and retirement benefits, taxpayer funded legal expenses, the ability to moonlight at other jobs, free flights back and forth to the lawmaker's home state and, of course, free parking.

Term limits would reduce corruption and open our government to new people with new ideas to solve our country's problems. They would decrease the influence of lobbyists and special interest groups who have far too much power in our current system. With regular turnover, lobbyists would not be able to exploit the close relationships that they now enjoy with career politicians.

The only serious opponents of term limits are incumbent politicians and the special interest groups that support them. In the 19th century the average turnover in each new Congress was 45%;

today it is approximately 10%. In the House of Representatives, for instance, the average job tenure is 10 years. The principal leaders (committee chairs, speaker, majority leader, whip) have served an average of 27 years.

Dianne Feinstein (D-CA) has been in Congress for 30 years, Steny Hoyer (D-MD) for 41 years, Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) for 35 years, Chuck Grassley (R-IA) for 42 years, Bernie Sanders (I-VT) for 31 years, Mitch McConnell (R-KY) for 37 years, Chuck Schumer (D-NY) for 41 years, Richard Shelby (R-AL) for 36 years, and Maxine Waters (D-CA) for 31 years; others have served long-term as well, in both parties.

The median net worth of a member of Congress is just over \$1 million. Rep. Collin Peterson (D-CA) was worth about \$123,500 in 2008. But the House Agricultural Committee chair's assets had grown to \$4.2 million by the time he left Congress early this past year. Rep. Judy Chu (D-CA) was worth less than \$100,000 when she entered Congress in 2009, but her net worth had risen to an estimated \$7.1 million only 10 years later. Sen. Roy Blunt (R-MO) was worth \$602,000 in 2010 before entering the Senate, but increased his wealth to \$10.7 million over the following decade. Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) has, over her 35 years in Congress, amassed a fortune of \$150 million. How do these people become so wealthy while on an average annual salary of \$174,000 a year? A very good question! And a major reason the country needs term limits.

William Stern, retiree from Half Hollow Hills School District

Yes, I support term limits for congressional seats. Additionally, I believe 80 should be the maximum age limit for all members of the Senate and House of Representatives.

Renee Pearlman, retiree from Hicksville Public Schools

There is a strong set of rationales for advocating to establish term limits for our elected officials. One interesting statistic is: presently the approval rating of Congress is be- (cont'd on page 5)

SPRING QUARTERLY QUERY
(cont'd from page 4)

low 20%, yet we re-elect over 90% of these Congress people. Incumbents have an overwhelming advantage over challengers. Term limits will create an atmosphere that nurtures more fair and competitive elections. Also, term limits will help remove 'Big Money' from politics. PAC money and lobbyists will have less sway over elected officials.

I feel the establishment of term limits will cause many of those people in power to act as if they were *Lame Ducks*. They will be more likely to vote their consciences without concern over their upcoming election.

Stewart Mortman, retiree from New Rochelle Public Schools

While I support the concept of term limits in principle, my service in an elected public position clearly influences my thinking on this issue. In the first year of my first term as a public library trustee, I often felt less than effective in my role. There is no question that it takes time to adjust to the "mores" of any institution — to understand how to get things done and to appreciate the nuances involved in crafting a course of action (or legislation in the case of our representatives in Washington). Of course, there is a "learning curve" for any new job, but the term of a member of the United States House of Representatives is only two years. It's possible that many new representatives aren't fully "up to speed" until the second year when they are already likely to be distracted by the need to run for re-election. Also, the traditions of both houses give key leadership positions to members who have served longer.

All of that taken into account, there is the fact that when one is in a position for a long time, there is a real risk of "ossification," resulting in an inability to conceive of or a reluctance to engage in positive change. After 15 years (three terms on the library board) I think that I was running out of fresh ideas and I was, frankly, just ready to move on to something new. So . . . I would suggest that members of the House of Representatives serve a maximum of 8 terms (16 years) and Senators no more than 3 terms (24 years). That would still mean that someone who served in the House and then was elected to the Senate could spend a total of up to 40 years in public service—but their constituents would always have the ability to vote them out of office at any point if they no longer felt they were being represented as they wished to be.

A side issue of retirement age requirements is relevant. Given advances in medicine many of us are able to be active and truly productive longer than was true in the past. Still, serving in Washington is undoubtedly stressful, dealing with the competing demands of your constituents and just commuting to and from your home district. For that reason, mandatory retirement at the age of 80 does seem quite reasonable.

Pat Galaskas, retiree from the Syosset Central School District

Newsletter articles reflect the views of their writers and do not represent "official" NYSRSAS positions unless so indicated. We welcome your comments.



US Congress

House of Representatives

431 Members & 6 delegates
 13 have served 30 years or more

Senate

102 members
 5 have served 30 years or more

RESULTS OF JANUARY 2022 MEMBERSHIP SURVEY

Corine Lipset-Huberman

In all of our efforts as an organization we want to reflect the interests and respond to the felt needs of our members. Our periodic member surveys help us keep current in terms of your priorities. This newsletter is one of the most immediate ways we can address your interests and invite your ongoing participation. We try to bring you topics of current interest as well as occasional out-of-the-box thinking by some of our writers. We always invite you to respond to our Quarterly Query as well as to submit articles that you would like us to print. The survey we conducted in January, 2022 will guide our choices in terms of the topics we include in our newsletters, those we review in focus groups and those we decide to address in position papers. Following is a summary of that survey.

Newsletter Topics and Priority Issues

We received 118 responses to our 2022 survey. Of that number, about 70% (2/3 or more) of



of our respondents were interested in newsletter topics related to current trends in education, current issues in politics and information related to

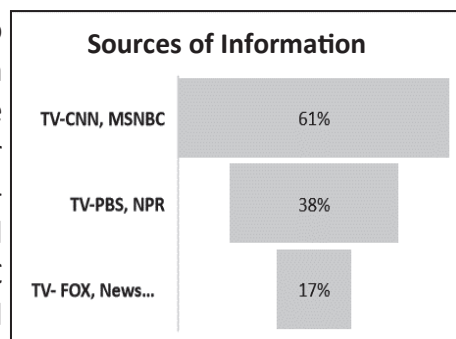
health/wellness/safety. Just under half expressed interest in environmental concerns and travel topics. Specific mentions were voter suppression and safeguarding democracy.

When asked which issues NYRSAS should focus on, retiree benefits had the highest number of responses. Somewhat below that were voting rights, political divisions and their impact on education, and gun safety. Specific mention of some issues included: retirees in an internet world, Critical Race Theory, stress factors on educators and political divisiveness.

Preferred Sources of Information

In response to the question, "How do you prefer to get your information?" more than half of our respondents (64%) preferred *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*, only 25% (or less) preferring *The Wall Street Journal* or *Newsday*. Facebook was a preferred source of information for 11% of the respondents, and only one member cited

Twitter. As to non-print media preferences, the highest number of our respondents preferred CNN and MSNBC (61%) followed by PBS and NPR



(38%); a significantly lower number (17%) preferred FOX and Newsmax.

Other Member Concerns

In response to the "Have Your Say" section, comments were very varied. One member pleaded that we address the need for career technology education, stating that not all students need or want to go on to college. (We did address that issue in the winter of 2020, and produced a position paper on Career Technology Education that was distributed widely. See April 2020 newsletter, p.4.)

Another member asked that we focus on state and local politics. As we have done in prior years, please be aware that we will soon be investigating the candidates running for some national and state positions. We will develop a rubric based on our organization's priorities, evaluate each candidate accordingly and then publish our endorsements in the October 2022 newsletter.

One respondent suggested that we provide some guidance for those who might want to fill interim positions, given the expected shortage of qualified teachers and administrators following the Covid pandemic. Another suggested that we explore mentoring opportuni- (cont'd on page 7)

MEMBER SURVEY RESULTS

(cont'd from page 6)

ties for our members. Interesting possibilities!

Where Do We Go From Here

The narrative comments we received generally stressed the issues before us all today – in our country, in our Congress, in our society, in our relationships with each other. Taken as a whole, one might say that our membership is not very happy with the state of affairs in our country and its effect on education. No surprise there – with skyrocketing inflation on food, staples and the price of gas, the growing bitterness and lack of respect between our two major political parties, the effects of Covid on health, the economy and education, the battles over immigration, the deleterious effects of the war between Russia and the Ukraine on the US and the rest of the world, and the terrible storms, fires, tornadoes that have more frequently occurred, some say attributable to climate change. Add to that, the very recent Supreme Court decisions related to gun safety, abortion and the environment, resulting in a fire-

storm of anger on the left. Not a happy picture, indeed!

So there you have it, my friends. This is what our fellow retirees are thinking about. We want to thank all who responded to our survey and encourage all our members to share their thoughts with us in answers to our Quarterly Query columns, to attend our Zoom meetings, and to send a letter to the editor at any time or to submit an article that you would like to share.* We welcome diversity of opinions, we encourage your participation. Please stay well and enjoy the summer months ahead!

**If you wish to attend a Zoom meeting, please email ejgoldwasser@optonline.net to request a link. To send something to be included in the newsletter, please email it to clipsethuberman@gmail.com.*

NYSRSAS Newsletter Editor, Dr. Corine Lipset-Huberman, and 1st Vice-President, Dr. Pat Galaskas, collaborated on the analysis of the results of the 2022 survey of our membership.

My Views on Fox News

Marvin Kreutzberger

It has taken me a long time – too long—to grasp a basic, fundamental idea. Admittedly, it took watching FOX NEWS just a few times recently for me to recognize what I have known much of my life.

Many of us are concrete learners. We take pride in our ability to rename fractions, convert fractions to decimals, find answers to quadratic equations. And we tell ourselves that these skills represent higher order thinking. Actually, these are practiced activities based upon repetition and reinforcement.



FOX KNOWS THIS. And it is among several reasons that it persists in its never-ending attacks on teaching and learning problem solving in our

nation's schools. Too few adults beyond age 40 have been educated in a way that encourages thinking. Much of their success has been built upon repetition and memorization – spelling tests and multiplication fact quizzes. Success with these tasks encourages this type of learning.

In school we have been asked to reason much less of the time. Socratic teaching is difficult to master and, by extension, even harder for students to add to their capabilities.

FOX PRACTICES THIS. It is far easier to rally support for simplistic, far-right 'facts'—distorting the Second Amendment, trying to convince the public that it is more important for one to own an automatic rifle and large magazines to hunt feral pigs or protect family than it is to better prepare people to think about the concept of democracy.

(cont'd on page 8)

My Views on Fox News
(cont'd from page 7)

FOX IS REALLY GOOD AT THIS. And until American schools value and emphasize teaching students HOW to think – as opposed to WHAT to think – that network will enjoy success and democracy will be at increased risk.

Marvin Kreutzberger retired as an Elementary School Principal from the Herricks UFSD. Prior to that he served as Director of Mathematics in NYC schools, has taught at Hofstra University, and worked as a math consultant to several Long Island school districts.

Editor's Note:

The NYSRSAS Newsletter always strives to present a diversity of views on any given topic. Our survey indicates that 17% of the members who responded to our survey listen to FOX NEWS and/or Newsmax. If one of our readers would like to submit an alternate view of FOX NEWS, we would be happy to print it in a future issue of the newsletter. Send your article to clipsethuberman@gmail.com.



Quarterly Query
SUMMER 2022



SHOULD THERE BE TERM LIMITS FOR SUPREME COURT JUSTICES ?

The Supreme Court has nine justices, one of whom serves as Chief Justice. Appointed by the President, subject to the approval of the Senate, they are all lifetime appointments. Recently, there has been much discussion over whether a) Supreme Court justices should be appointed for a specified number of years, or b) if not a limited number of years, should a retirement age be mandated and, if so, at what age? What do you think?

Please write and let us know your opinion.

Send your thoughts to
clipsethuberman@gmail.com
(Kindly include your name and the district from which you retired.)

“Education is not filling a bucket but lighting a fire.”

(Author unknown . . . found inside a fortune cookie)



N.Y.S. Retired School Administrators and Supervisors
1300 Veterans Memorial Highway
Suite 330
Hauppauge, NY 11788

FIRST CLASS
U.S. Postage
PAID
Deer Park, NY
Permit No. 173

first class