



NYSRSAS UPDATE

Eugene Goldwasser

Mid-Term Election Endorsements

Our focus for the past few months has been the mid-term elections scheduled for this November. Members of the executive board engaged in a process designed to assess candidates for office objectively. To this end, we developed a rubric to evaluate the candidates for the following races in New York State: Governor, US Senate, US Congress, New York State Senate. A more detailed explanation of the process and the rubrics as well as the complete list of endorsed candidates appears on pages 2 and 3.

We encourage our members to vote for the candidates we endorse as they are aligned with issues that are important to retirees' welfare as well as those concerns we have discussed in the newsletter in the past.

NYSRSAS Citizenship Awards

For the third year, we will be granting NYSRSAS Citizenship Awards to deserving high school juniors who exemplify the characteristics of good citizenship as students and members of their high school community. The students selected are nominated by their principals, who are free to seek input from guidance counselors and/or teachers in their schools.

Last year, we sought nominations from 16 high schools and nine responded. This year, we will expand the total number to 20 or more high schools. The number is limited by the funds in the Citizenship Award account. Funding comes from donations from NYSRSAS gen-

eral and executive board members.

Each awardee receives a NYSRSAS Citizenship Award certificate and a check for \$100. To date, 15 students have received the NYSRSAS Citizenship Award. We are pleased to work with school administrators to provide this award, which, we hope, reinforces good citizenship behaviors in our schools.



Executive Board Meetings on Zoom

The NYSRSAS Executive Board continues to meet on Zoom. While we anticipate meeting in person sometime in 2023, Zoom provides the convenience of meeting from home or wherever our members log in from, and eliminates the need to drive to the meeting location.

Interested in attending one of our executive board meetings? Please send an email to ejgoldwasser@optonline.net and you will receive an invitation allowing you to access the meeting a few days before the scheduled time. The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, December 15, 2022, at 10 AM.

NYSRSAS President, Gene Goldwasser, was a school principal for 24 years. Since retiring, he has been a Hofstra adjunct professor and a coach with the Institute for Student Achievement.

NYSRSAS BOARD MEETINGS 2022-23

December 15, 2022

March 16, 2023

June 15, 2023

2022 ELECTIONS

THE NYSRSAS ENDORSEMENT PROCESS

Elections for the year 2022 will soon be upon us and Executive Board members of NYSRSAS have been busy doing their homework. Over the past month, members researched candidates running for the following offices:

- Governor of New York,
- United States Senator from New York,
- New York members of the House of Representatives for Districts 1, 2, 3 and 4
- Representatives to the New York State Senate for Districts 1 through 8.

Each of our Executive Board members volunteered to take on one of these races and studied both the Democrat and Republican candidates competing for the position. We researched their backgrounds, their positions on issues, their voting records, their websites and, if possible, information gleaned from personal communication. Responses from the candidates were weighed against two rubrics (one for Federal House of Representative candidates and one for State Senate candidates), which had previously been developed in accord with a list of areas of concern for retired

educators.

On September 15, an Executive Board meeting was held for the purpose of deciding which candidates for the above listed offices our organization would endorse. Each member presented the viewpoints of both candidates, rated their responses to issues against the items on the rubric and made a recommendation for endorsement. Members voted on each recommendation, with consensus needed for approval.



Following on page 3 is a list of the candidates endorsed by NYSRSAS. You may notice that for the first time this year we have two races in which we made no endorsement. This was because, despite our research and our best efforts to contact candidates directly, we were not able to get a clear picture of their positions on the issues, apart from the predictable stands of their respective parties. As we always endeavor to take a non-partisan position based solely on the issues of concern, we felt the most honest conclusion was to make no endorsement in these instances.

A DOZEN REASONS WHY YOU MUST VOTE

“Our political leaders will know our priorities only if we tell them, again and again, and if those priorities begin to show up in the polls.” Peggy Noonan

“The most important office, and the one which all of us should fill, is that of private citizen.”
Louis Brandeis

“Not voting is not a protest. It is a surrender.” Keith Ellison

“There’s no such thing as a vote that doesn’t matter.” Barack Obama

“We do not have government by majority. We have government by the majority who participate.”
Thomas Jefferson

“Bad officials are elected by good citizens who don’t vote.” George Jean Nathan

“The ballot is stronger than the bullet.” Abraham Lincoln

“One of the penalties for refusing to participate in politics is that you end up being governed by your inferiors.” Plato

“If you don’t vote, you lose the right to complain.” George Carlin

“A man without a vote is a man without protection.” Lyndon B. Johnson

“Always vote for principle, though you may vote alone, and you may cherish the sweetest reflection that your vote is never lost.” John Quincy Adams

“Elections belong to the people. It’s their decision. If they decide to turn their back on the fire and burn their behinds, then they will just have to sit on their blisters.” Abraham Lincoln

NYSRSAS Endorses . . .

NYSRSAS Executive Board members realize that we all vote based upon a variety of factors. However, there are key issues involving retirees and public education that we believe should be considered in making a final decision. Therefore, we carefully studied campaign materials for the offices shown below with our sole focus (independent of our own party affiliations or those of the candidates) on candidates’ views on social security, health care, voting rights, equality/equity (racial and sexual), gun safety, climate change, taxation and, at the state level, education — including public school funding, support for mental health services and attention to the needs of low wealth communities, as well as their position on tuition costs for higher education. We shared our findings and reached consensus on recommending the endorsement of the candidates listed below.



United State Congress

Senate—*Charles Schumer (D)*

House of Representatives

District #1 – *Bridget Fleming (D)*

District #2 – *Jackie Gordon (D)*

District #3 – *Robert Zimmerman (D)*

District #4 - *Laura Gillen (D)*

New York State

Governor— *Kathleen Hochul (D)*

NYS Senate

Senate District #1 - *no endorsement*

Senate District #2 - *Susan Berland (D)*

Senate District #3 - *Dean Murray (R)*

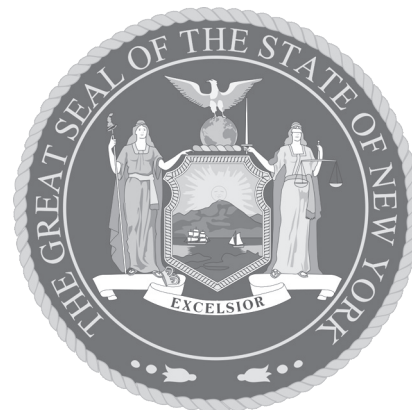
Senate District #4 - *Monica Martinez (D)*

Senate District #5 – *John Brooks (D)*

Senate District #6 – *Kevin Thomas (D)*

Senate District #7 – *Anna Kaplan (D)*

Senate District #8 – *no endorsement*



FROM THE DESK OF: *The Reflective Retiree*

THE NUMBER OF JUSTICES ON THE SUPREME COURT: A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Corine Lipset-Huberman

Since our Quarterly Query for this issue has to do with the service of the Justices of the Supreme Court – number of terms permitted or retirement by a certain age – I offer this historical perspective on the number of Justices on the Court, as this is also an issue currently under discussion.

Many Americans were astounded at the current proposal of increasing the number of Justices on the Supreme Court from nine to possibly 13. In reality, the number was changed six times before settling on nine in 1869. The Judiciary Act of 1789 established the Supreme Court with six Justices. In 1801, President John Adams and a lame duck Congress reduced the number to five in order to limit President Thomas Jefferson's appointments to the bench. Jefferson brought the number back to six, and in 1807 added a seventh, when Congress added a seventh federal court circuit. In 1837 Congress again expanded federal circuit court districts, adding two more Justices to make a grand total of nine. During the Civil War, a tenth federal court circuit was added and a tenth Justice was appointed. In 1866, the number was reduced to seven but in 1869, a new Judiciary Act set the number back to nine. And there it stood – until 1937, when President Franklin Delano Roosevelt tried to increase the number to 15!

The new President inherited a nation in distress, still suffering from the Great Depression. FDR swiftly proposed recovery measures called "The New Deal," which Congress quickly enacted. However, as quickly as these new laws were enacted, the Supreme Court just as speedily invalidated them. FDR soon realized that his New Deal was no match for the adamantly conservative bloc of Justices as measure after measure was revoked. After winning a landslide

reelection victory in 1936, FDR boldly requested that Congress grant him the authority to reform the Supreme Court, arguing that the court's caseload was too heavy, its members "slow and infirm." His plan would allow him to appoint an additional Justice for every one not retired by age 70. This would allow him as many as six new Justices.

The nine Justices were insulted by the Roosevelt administration's proposal, even the liberal bloc. In fear of the proposal being accepted, the conservative bloc reversed their original stance against "New Deal" initiatives and began to approve them. Heated debates ensued on the Senate floor, more and more heated during Washington's sweltering summer climate. In fact, Senate Majority Leader Joe Robinson of Arkansas was so agitated in his rounds with the opposition that he left one evening with the strain showing on his reddened face and his shoulders stooped. When he returned to his apartment that night, he dropped dead, it is said from the heat and the stress. Eventually, senators who had been only somewhat committed to the plan switched their loyalties and on July 22, 1937, FDR's plan for enlarging the Supreme Court was defeated.

And so, from 1869 until the present year of 2022 – 153 years -- the number of Supreme Court Justices has stood steadfastly at nine. Democrats, concerned about the present conservative makeup of the Court, have suggested the possibility of increasing the number of Justices. Will they be successful? We will have to wait and 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 Syosset, NY.

SUMMER QUARTERLY QUERY—SUPREME COURT TERM LIMITS

Recently there has been much discussion over whether a) Supreme Court justices should be appointed for a specified number of years, or b) should a retirement age be mandated and, if so, at what age?

In light of the recent Supreme Court decision overturning *Roe v Wade*, politicians (of all persuasions), as well as media pundits have voiced a variety of opinions about restructuring the Supreme Court. The Dictionary “App” lists 42 synonyms for the word *supreme*! With only minor differences, all of the synonyms relate to being the arbiter of final decisions – especially those that relate to the support of democracy. One wonders if there are an equivalent number of suggestions about Court restructure. While reading *The New York Times* promotion of a recent best-seller, *Everything is Fucked*, by Mark Manson (Harper & Collins, 2019), I thought about the large number of comments and strength of commitment voiced about Court change. Manson wrote “. . . today’s tyranny is achieved by flooding people with so much diversion, so much bullshit, that they are unable to make smart commitments.” Does the structure of the current Court allow justices to sort through many diversions? Is it time to consider term of appointment, length of term, required retirement age, number of justices on the Court without being accused of ageism?

In 2020 the American Academy of Arts and Sciences organized a bipartisan Commission on the Practice of Democratic Citizenship. After a two-year study, the Commission made 31 recommendations to strengthen our democratic institutions.

Recommendation 1.8 references the Supreme Court. It specifies “. . . establish through federal legislation eighteen-year

terms for justices staggered such, that one nomination comes up during each term of Congress. At the end of the term, justices will transition to an Appeals Court for their life tenure. Recommendations related to required retirement age or number of Court justices were noticeably missing.

Is the entire restructuring of one of our three branches of government necessary? The Supreme Court has functioned for over 150 years without change, sometimes successfully, sometimes not. Does the old adage “don’t reinvent the wheel” apply? If it does not apply, can we survive the political volcano that will surely erupt? Think about it!

Lifetime appointments of justices to the Supreme Court were mandated in the Constitution to avoid political interference based upon a specific issue. One can only imagine the political infighting each time a justice’s 18-year appointment concludes. Will the Court itself be guilty of age discrimination? Hopefully, each justice, after thoughtful input from colleagues, family, friends, loved ones and legal scholars, will know when his or her retirement time “has arrived.” In the meantime, until a good resolution to the numerous issues that will occur with change is found, let’s leave the Supreme Court alone and rely upon Congress to do its due diligence.

Martin Mandelker

Many surveys indicate that the American public is losing confidence in all institutions ranging from religious to governmental. Although the US Supreme Court was one of the more well-regarded branches of government, it too is losing support. Chief Justice Roberts claims there are no *(continued on page 6)*



SUPREME COURT TERM LIMITS
(cont'd from page 5)

Obama judges and no Trump judges but his words fall upon deaf ears. A significant number of citizens consider the Court to be merely another political institution.

The process by which recent justices have been appointed to the Court only exacerbates this perception. Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell and his Republican colleagues refused to grant a hearing to Merrick Garland, President Obama’s nominee, contending that it was too close to a presidential election which was eight months away. Yet four years later, the Republican controlled Senate pushed through Trump’s nomination of Amy Coney Barrett while citizens were already engaged in early voting for president.

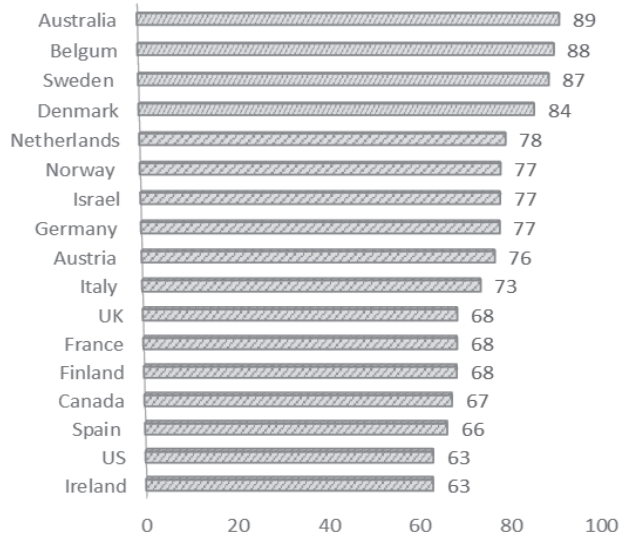
Legal scholars proposed several plans to deal with the issue of restructuring the Court, including constitutional amendment, required retirement ages and term limits. The best of these is creating terms of 18 years for Supreme Court justices. Specifically, the plan would have a president appoint a justice during the first and third year of each term of office, resulting in a full rotation on the Court every 18 years and ensuring each president could nominate at least two justices.

Obviously, there is concern about what would happen to current justices. One proposal would have current justices elevated to “senior status” in order of their longevity on the Court. Senior justices would participate in matters such as what cases are heard, but not be involved in deciding key cases. A similar system is now used in lower courts. This arrangement would increase public confidence in the belief that the majority is better represented on the Court in a climate of political diversity.

Edward Price

VOTING PARTICIPATION BY COUNTRY

% OF REGISTERED VOTERS CASTING BALLOTS IN RECENT ELECTIONS



Quarterly Query
AUTUMN 2022



It is indeed shameful that Americans are so derelict in their duty as citizens to participate in our annual voting process. What suggestions do you have, by age group (young, middle-age, senior) that you think would encourage more people to engage in the election of officers at all levels, from federal to state to local?

Please be as specific as possible. Your suggestion might be only a one or two-liner. I will gather all responses, organize them, and send them to the Chairs of both the Democratic and Republican National Committees, with a request that they be sent on to the proper authorities in every state in the United States.

Please send your thoughts to
clipsethuberman@gmail.com

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

LESSONS FOR DEMOCRACY: THE IMPORTANCE OF VOTING

EDWARD PRICE

A recent *NY Times* Siena poll revealed that many young people see voting as useless exercise since they believe nothing changes. This

information raises concern about the future of American democracy. Participation in national elections by eligible citizens is already low. In the 2020 presidential election, 63 percent of registered voters participated, which is the highest in recent history. However, this

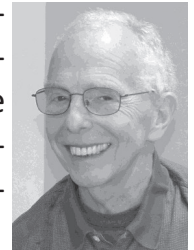
is the lowest participation rate of any western democracy. [See chart on page 6.]

Although President Biden won the total tally by more than 7 million votes, results in several key states were much closer. For example, Biden defeated Trump by fewer than 11,000 votes in Arizona and Georgia and less than 100,000 in Pennsylvania. Certainly, voting in these states made a critical difference in the electoral college results.

Voting for members of Congress is equally important. For the past few years, inaction by the House of Representatives and especially the Senate limited the president's ability to make many of the changes desired by many citizens. Action is blocked by arcane rules that allow a minority to prevent passage of legislation desired by a majority of Americans. Obviously, selection of congressional representatives and senators in 2022 will determine how the nation deals with critical issues in the future.

Nevertheless, it is anticipated that voter participation will follow historical trends with interest in "off year" elections declining significantly.

In recent years, participation in nonpresidential years averaged about 40 percent. Those who complain about congressional gridlock need to accept responsibility to reverse this trend.



While national elections receive major media attention and voter interest, actions by state and local governments have an equal impact on our daily lives. However, these elections receive even less participation. For example, in 2022, voting for members of the Cold Spring Harbor Board of Education and school budget had only 1,093 ballots, 15.7 percent of eligible voters. Voting for the library board and budget was even worse. Only 73 people participated. These results may reflect general satisfaction with local institutions.

Unfortunately, complacency allows extremists an opportunity to gain control of local governments. *The New York Times* reported that extremist groups view positions on community boards as a base to assume power in mainstream organizations. A good example of the effectiveness of their plans is seen in events in Croydon, New Hampshire where members of the Free State Project took control of the town board.

In January 2022, one of the town selectmen aligned with the Free State Project proposed eliminating the police department and firing its sole employee, the chief. The three-member town select board agreed and required the chief to surrender his badge and police gear. In March, the town held the annual meeting where the few residents attending approved the town budget. That afternoon residents met to consider the \$1.7 million school budget. A member of (cont'd on page 8)

THE IMPORTANCE OF VOTING *(cont'd from page 7)*

the Free State group stood to object and proposed cutting the appropriation by more than half to \$800,000. He argued that high school children could be educated in less costly private schools than in the nearby public school and that activities such as sports and music instruction were unnecessary for students to participate intelligently in a free government. The modified budget was approved by a vote of 20 to 14. The school board chaired by the wife of the Free State objector revised the school budget to comply with the accepted revisions by cutting or outsourcing school positions and hiring a private contractor to teach the lower grades with a certified teacher overseeing three uncertified "guides."

The majority of residents suddenly were shaken out of complacency when they learned of the reduction in services and that they would have to pay thousands of dollars to keep their children in public high school. Several citi-

zens formed the We Stand Up for Croydon committee. They found that New Hampshire law permitted citizens to petition for a special town meeting where the budget cut could be overturned. To achieve the goal, half of the town's citizens had to vote in favor. A special meeting attended by 379 residents was held in May where the reduced budget was overturned by a vote of 377 to 2. The citizens of Croydon realized that they failed to meet their democratic obligations of being informed and participating in local elections.

While the experience of Croydon may be exceptional, it provides an important lesson. Ignoring the responsibilities of citizenship can lead to disaster. Fortunately, the citizens of Croydon were able to unite against the extremists, but complacency can lead to a loss of democratic institutions. Ultimately, we will get what we deserve.



N.Y.S. Retired School Administrators and Supervisors

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