

Legislation Mar. 2016

1. Elder Abuse:

Not our Bill, but legislation that requires the reporting of data related to Elder Abuse to the Governor and the Legislature biannually (S852 and A83) goes into effect in January 2016.

2. A concern we have is the 2017 New York State Constitutional Convention. NYSRTA President, Angelo Grande is working to form a coalition of the education alphabet groups to address the concerns related to the public vote that will come as to whether a convention should be held. At stake for our members is a possible negative impact on our pensions, taxes on our pensions, and the actual cost to taxpayers of the convention itself. We have seen the benefits reduced with each new tier: there are six retirement "Tiers" within the TRS at this time: Tier 1, Tier 2, Tier 3, Tier 4, Tier 5 and Tier 6.

We need to strongly support protection of our public defined benefit plans, not only for ourselves but future retirees. Such plans provide a defined, predictable, guaranteed benefit, usually based on factors such as age, earnings, and years of service. In contrast, defined contribution plans offer no guaranteed, predictable retirement benefit and place retirement security at the risk of stock or bond markets.

As educators we do not retire into a life of luxury. We have spent our lives dedicated to public service, often forgoing higher salaries offered in the private sector. We have earned and deserve the modest pensions we were promised.

3. We are still pushing to improve COLA law to more accurately account for increases in inflation by raising the base amount or by allowing for higher CPI percentage to be applied. We presently are working to get sponsors in both the Senate and Assembly. We heard from State Comptroller, Tom DiNapoli, that he is much in favor of this legislation; however, most legislators want more research done on the costs associated with these measures (some estimates as high as \$5 billion over five years).

4. Virtually every aspect of our lives, every institution, and every activity is affected by government. This is particularly true of the State Legislature as it relates to programs for education retirees. The State Legislature is pressure-sensitive and will respond to needs if the effort is made to contact them in an effective manner. Complaining about it and wishing for it will not make it happen. It takes organized and persistent action. We need you all to take an active role.

Types and Effective Communication can be by phone calls, letters and most effective of all, personal contact. We need members to help in this area especially this year with election being held on state and federal levels. Please contact me if you can help in any way.

5. Just received notice of a new backdoor voucher schemes designed to put hundreds of millions of taxpayer dollars into certain Individuals' and corporations' private pockets. Introduced with the proposed budget, the Education Investment Tax Credit is a thinly disguised private school voucher scheme offered under the guise of charitable giving for education purposes. Individuals and corporations will be able to reduce their tax bills by sending what they would otherwise owe in taxes to a foundation or educational scholarship organization that will turn the money into a private school voucher or will subsidize tuition at both religious and non-religious private schools. And the price tag? \$170 million in the first year, alone!

Bill Lesniak, Legislation Chair