



PEA Broadside March 2017



President's Column

I hope that all of you enjoyed a restful, pleasant, well-deserved spring break. With the current string of beautiful weather, it hardly seems possible that last month brought snow, wind, rain, power outages, and stress...lots and lots of stress! It was nice to have the unexpected time off--especially if you were lucky enough to have power--but the snow days came with a heavy price. I discussed applying for a waiver from the State Ed Department with Dr. Putnam, but as he explained in a district letter, the waiver was not a possibility for Penfield or our neighboring districts affected by this storm and its aftermath. We did, however, take this time to discuss various plans for the district should we encounter a similar situation in the future.

It was no surprise that teachers worked tirelessly to ensure that our students did not miss a beat because of the unexpected snow days. Thank you for your extra effort.

I am happy to report that our most recent negotiations meeting held right before break (April 11) was very productive. We are making steady strides in coming to an agreement on our major issues. If we continue in this manner, I anticipate having a contract proposal to present to the membership before the end of next month. It is my sincere belief that we are close to reaching an agreement which is fair and equitable and which values the contribution we make to our district.

We must be vigilant at this stage of the negotiations process. I will not bring a proposal to the membership until we have finalized contract language and double-checked our work with the NYSUT legal team.

I have been asked about the timeline for contract ratification once a proposal is ready to be presented. I want to ensure that members have enough time to both study the proposal and discuss it at a building level and at a general meeting of our full membership. Once the PEA and district have a tentative agreement in place, the proposal goes to the membership to review. Each building can hold its own meeting(s) for the purpose of discussion, and a general meeting of the membership will be scheduled during which further discussion can occur. I will lead that discussion, and the negotiations team will be available to answer any questions. Following the general meeting, a ratification vote will occur. A simple majority vote cast by secret ballot of the active membership present at the ratification meeting will determine whether the contract passes. If the contract is ratified by the membership, the district then presents the contract to the school board. If the board accepts it, PEA has a new contract in place. My personal goal is to have an agreement in place by the end of this school year.



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Coming up:

- There will be two seats open for the upcoming school board elections. In the very near future, PEA needs your help in supporting candidates we feel best represent the needs of our students and faculty. We will be taking an active role in these elections, including staffing phone banks, sending out postcards, and distributing yard signs. Please consider saying “YES!” if you are called upon to help.
- Wednesday, April 26, is Administrative Professionals Day. Please take a moment to thank these valuable professionals for the important work they do for our students and staff each and every day.

Thank you for your continued commitment to making Penfield a truly outstanding district. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact your building reps or me. We are here to serve you.

Together we are Union Strong.



In solidarity,
Bob Young

Vice-President's Column

The “Con” of the NYS Constitutional Convention

The citizens of NY have the choice to convene a **Constitutional Convention** every 20 years. In November 2017, this option will be on the ballot. I encourage everyone to learn more about the upcoming vote. This article will begin to lay out reason why we should be against convening a convention. In general, the NYS Constitution delineates the freedoms and protections guaranteed to our citizens and the authority of the specific branches of





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government. A brief list of a few of the constitutionally protected freedoms and governmental limits are:

State Bill of Rights (Article I)

Right to a free public education for students (Article XI)

Prohibiting the selling or leasing of public Adirondack Forest Lands (Article XIV)

Prohibiting reductions in public pensions (Article V)

The State Debt Limit (Article XII)

These and other protections would be under attack if a convention is convened. An example of part of the proposed constitution from the failed 1967 convention included granting the Governor the power to establish, re-organize and/or abolish State agencies or departments. This power currently resides with the legislature.

Supporters of a convention argue the legislature and governor in Albany are not operating efficiently or are corrupt; a convention would allow the people to “fix” Albany. Unfortunately, it would be the same politicians currently in Albany who would serve as the delegates to the convention and get paid for both jobs at the same time!

Supporters argue that we haven’t had a rewrite of the Constitution since the 1930’s so it is out of date. The truth is the people of New York State have amended the Constitution many times without convening a convention. Some key amendments included the construction of I-87 Northway through the Adirondacks, authorizing casino gambling in NY, allowing the legislature to go paperless, and most recently in 2015 a controversial amendment relating to a forest land exchange in the Adirondacks.

What I find most interesting is the diversity of those opposing the convention: fiscal conservatives who do not want to see the debt limit raised, unions who want to protect collective bargaining as a right, firearms advocates who do not want to see an increase in gun control, and environmentalists who want to protect our public lands to name a few.

Over the next few months I encourage everyone to be informed and learn why it is imperative to vote “NO” on the proposed Constitutional Convention.

The current NYS Constitution is available here: <https://www.dos.ny.gov/info/constitution.htm>

-Russ Byer, PEA Vice-President



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Retirement Information from NYSTRS

The retirement rush has begun! Those planning to retire July 1 have already begun filing their retirement applications with NYSTRS.

Whether you are considering retiring this year or in the near future, there are several steps you should take to prepare. Here are the six things everyone should do before filing their retirement papers:

1. **Attend a PREP Seminar.** These free seminars, offered year-round and open to all, cover NYSTRS benefits, financial planning, Social Security, estate planning and more. The seminar [schedule](#) is posted on our website and summer dates will be added soon.
2. **Schedule a Consultation.** Meet with a NYSTRS representative, in person or by live video, to discuss your retirement questions. Run estimates for different retirement dates and discuss the various payment options available to you. See the online version of the Benefits Consultations [schedule](#).
3. **Understand Your Payment Options Before Choosing.** Members who select the wrong payment option often face difficult financial and emotional challenges later. Avoid this mistake at all costs! Thoroughly [review](#) the difference between each and consider discussing them with a NYSTRS representative before making your selection. Also watch our two-part video “[Your NYSTRS Benefit Payment](#)” found in the Videos > Member Information section of the Library at [NYSTRS.org](#).
4. **Apply for Retirement With NYSTRS.** Retiring from your employer does not automatically trigger retirement benefit payments. You must also file an [Application for Retirement](#) (RET-54) with NYSTRS in order to receive your monthly pension payment.
5. **Know When to File Your Retirement Application.** File too early (more than 90 days before your official date of retirement) and the application will not be valid. File on your date of retirement if you wish, but make sure your date of retirement is at least one day after your contract with your employer expires. File by early June if you want to receive your first payment in July.
6. **Note That You Have a Limited Window for Withdrawing or Changing the Terms of Your Retirement.** From your date of retirement you have 14 days to withdraw your retirement application and 30 days to change your benefit payment option. State law does not allow for exceptions.





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If questions arise during the planning process, call (800) 348-7298, Ext. 6250 to speak with a NYSTRS representative. Retirement is one of your biggest life events so it is important to ensure you have all the facts before making decisions.