

DECEMBER 2017



Joan Greenbaum, Editor

Academic Year 2017-18 No. 4

[psc-cuny.org/retirees](http://psc-cuny.org/retirees)

**MONDAY, DECEMBER 4—JUST DESERTS: FOOD POLITICS AND ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE.** 1 pm, PSC Union Hall, 16th floor, 61 Broadway.

**Speakers:**

**Craig Willingham** joined the CUNY Urban Food Policy Institute as deputy director in late 2016. Prior to that, Craig worked for the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene. At DOHMH, Craig worked with supermarkets, bodegas, farmers markets and other food retail outlets to expand access to healthy affordable food in New York City.

**Nick Freudenberg** is a distinguished professor of public health at the CUNY School of Public Health and the director of the CUNY Urban Food Policy Institute. For the last 35 years, he has worked with community groups, churches, social movements, government agencies and community residents to develop, implement and evaluate policies and programs that promote health and reduce inequalities in health.

**Nancy Romer**, professor emerita, Brooklyn

College, has been a labor, food and climate activist, and is presently active on the PSC Environmental Justice Working Group. She was founder of the Brooklyn Food Coalition.

Join us for discussion, light refreshments and the opportunity to renew ties with new, and not so new, retiree colleagues.

Come for the meeting and stay for the

**CONTRACT CAMPAIGN KICK-OFF MARCH & RALLY**

Grab a bite with a colleague or two and then please join a large contingent of PSC retirees rallying and marching for a strong new PSC contract.

**4:30 pm Gather at the Graduate Center**

**5:00 pm march to Baruch College**

**5:30 pm Rally at Baruch during CUNY Board of Trustees Meeting**

The PSC contract expires on November 30. The event will pressure the Board of Trustees to negotiate a fair and timely contract. The union has important demands, including a salary goal of \$7,000 per course for our adjunct brothers and sisters. We may be retired, but we support our hard-working colleagues.

**MONDAY, JANUARY 8.  
ANNUAL WINTER LUNCHEON  
*Fear City: New York's Fiscal Crisis  
and the Rise of Austerity Politics.*  
12:30 pm, John Jay College  
Reservation form on page 10**

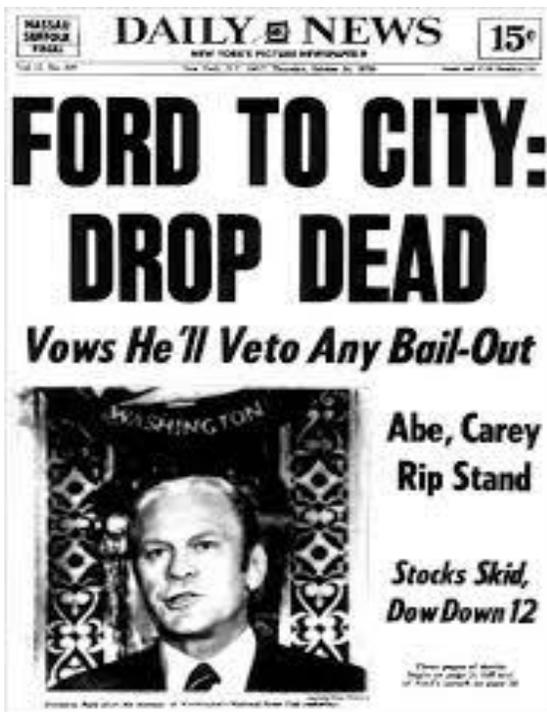
**Speaker:**

**Kim Phillips-Fein**, author of *Fear City: New York's Fiscal Crisis and the Rise of Austerity Politics*. Professor Phillips-Fein teaches American political, business and labor history at NYU. She is also the author of *Invisible Hands: The Making of the Conservative Movement from the New Deal to Reagan*.

Professor Phillips-Fein will speak on the 1970s NYC Fiscal Crisis, examining how business and political leaders used the shock and trauma of the city's financial woes to promote a regimen of extreme austerity. Retirees, who lived through that crisis, directly experienced that austerity and retrenchment at CUNY.

Discussion following Phillips-Fein's presentation will no doubt be enriched by observations of those of us in the audience who lived through the Fiscal Crisis.

The luncheon returns to John Jay, where there will be waiter service and a wine bar. Reservations are \$26 per person. Spouses and friends are welcome. A reservation form, with full details, is available on the last page of the newsletter.



The iconic front page of the NY Daily News, Oct. 29, 1975 during the NYC Fiscal crisis.

### FLORIDA RETIREES AND SNOWBIRDS: SAVE THE DATE.

The annual Florida Branch Benefits Seminar and Luncheon is set for **Monday, February 12** at the Lakeside Terrace in Boca Raton. An invitation and reservation form will be sent to all PSC retiree residents

in Florida in December. If you are a snowbird and wish to be included in the mailing, contact the chapter at [retirees@pscmail.org](mailto:retirees@pscmail.org), providing us with your name and mailing and email addresses.

### PSC/CUNY-COPE



As usual, retirees responded generously to an appeal last spring to contribute to PSC/CUNY-COPE, the union's political action arm. We raised \$16,345, with contributions ranging from \$10 to \$200.

This month you should have received a PSC/CUNY-Cope appeal for this academic year. As the letter indicated:

"We live in an ugly, cruel political climate. Much of what we believe in and fought for is under siege—public education, public-sector unions, our immigrant students, our safety net benefits (Medicare, Medicaid and Social Security), the very air, land and water that sustain us—and much more."

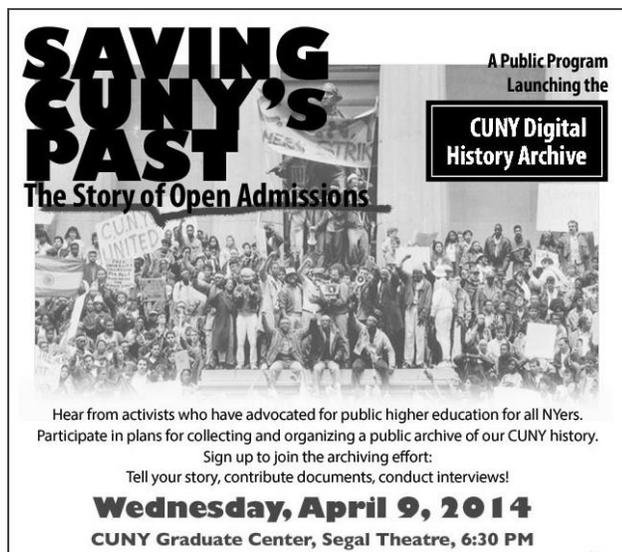
But, the letter added, the "good news is that more and more of us have become aware, active and mobilized. That's why it is important to finance an important piece of that mobilization by giving to PSC/CUNY-COPE."

"By giving, you amplify our voice. We will be heard!" If you haven't already, please consider contributing to PSC/CUNY-COPE. If you did not receive a letter or misplaced it, email us at [retirees@pscmail.org](mailto:retirees@pscmail.org) with the subject line "VOTE COPE."

## THE MONTH THAT WAS OPEN ADMISSIONS CHAPTER MEETING

-John Hyland, retiree, LaGuardia  
Community College

On Monday, November 6, the PSC Retiree Chapter meeting focused on a topic that has deeply touched the lives of many of us in attendance. Another packed house (we were close to running out of chairs) was treated to a panel addressing the struggle over the Open Admissions (OA) policy at CUNY. Organized by Larry Rushing (retiree, LaGuardia Community College), the panel examined OA historically, sociologically, and in its current state.



Flyer for 2014 program at CUNY Grad Center for program on history of Open Admissions.

**Stephen Steinberg** (Queens College and Graduate Center) began the session with a Power Point presentation entitled "The Birth and Assassination of Open Admissions at CUNY". Ricardo Gabriel (graduate student in sociology at the CUNY Graduate Center) used his personal experience and research to shed light on the positive effects and political dynamics of OA. And Maureen Pierce-Anyan (director of minority student affairs and pre-professional advisement at

Queens College) shared her research report "Restricted Access, Limited Equity: Open Enrollment and Black Students at Queens College."

Steinberg contextualized OA by presenting a history of the public colleges that became City University in 1960, and the stages of economic, political and cultural development that led to OA. He also traced what he called the assassination of OA—not something that simply "happened," but the result of a series of politically based academic decisions—from the late 1970s through the late 1990s. The story and analysis included many famous and controversial themes, events and persons: the "proletarian Harvard," the tradition of Jewish students in the public colleges, the post-World War II demographic changes in NYC, the social movements of the 1960s (civil rights, Black power, student activism, anti-Vietnam War, women's movements), as well as the attacks on CUNY and OA by Rudolph Giuliani, Benno Schmidt, and the Manhattan Institute, among others.

**Ricardo Gabriel** spoke of the positive impact of OA on his family, opening the access to college and leading to professional careers for his mother and aunt, in turn building opportunities for his own advancement. His graduate research addresses the struggle over Puerto Rican Studies in CUNY, and includes oral histories of Puerto Rican student activists in that struggle. The student demands of the 1969 movement which pushed OA forward expressed the experience of African-American and Puerto Rican students with racism and the lack of voice and participation in educational policy decisions. He called for increased funding for ethnic and critical studies.

**Maureen Pierce-Anyan's** research was a case study of Queens College enrollment patterns, and used a variety of charts and graphs detailing the dynamics of enrollment

over time. The ending of remediation at the Senior Colleges in 1999 played a major role in the shifting percentages of African-American, White, Latino and Asian students at Queens College and throughout the University, as did the Great Recession of 2007-2009. Changing admission standards also affected the changing student trends of the student body at Queens and the other "research colleges." Her closing remarks pointed to an anemic will to overcome the lack of effort and resources for achieving educational and social equality, and raised the question "where do we go next?"

The discussion following the presentations reminded us that OA lives on in a variety of ways at the Community Colleges, suggested that the critique of the fate of OA should not diminish our awareness of its successes in the lives of many students and communities. The issue is worthy of another session. As our chairperson, Bill Friedheim noted, we had an accumulated 1800 Years of experience in the room. We remember. We worked for Open Admissions. We know that the struggle continues.

## TIME & TIME AGAIN

*-Joan Greenbaum, retiree, Laguardia CC*

When I first pitched a tour of the Meatpacking District's manhole covers and infrastructure, the general reaction of many on the Retirees Executive Committee was "phewy." Yet when Michele Brody, artist and scholar, took twenty of us on the **Hidden Histories Walking Tour on Oct 23<sup>rd</sup>**, the reaction was "wow—we've got a whole new way of looking at the city."

**Michele Brody** says that she "thinks of manhole covers as liminal objects—where they serve as physical portals between the light of our day-to-day lives above ground and the inner workings of the city services and infrastructure located in the darkness

below the city streets. Manhole covers have the potential to serve as living mandalas where one can step onto an actual meditative space within their radiating patterns to consider this liminal place of in-between." Indeed she opened our eyes to the extraordinary beauty and history of these portals to an older and structural New York. Brody sees these covers as public art. Some, she pointed out, go back to the 1880s. Next time you step off a curb (and have looked out for cars!) take a look down—notice if the cover says it's made in India or the USA or elsewhere, and if you have the time, take a look at the design. Do you know why manhole covers have intricate patterns? [Short answer: to keep us from slipping.]. Do you know why covers are round? [Pop quiz—answer will be revealed in the next Issue].



Manhole cover in the Meatpacking District

You can find out more about Michele Brody through her website: <http://michelebrody.com> and read more about her interest in things beneath New York in *Women & Performance: a Journal of Feminist Theory*, Issue 24 - 2002, titled *Trafficking Boundaries*, NYU Tisch School of the Arts, Department of Performance Studies.

## LOOKING BACKWARD & THINKING FORWARD

*-Eileen Moran, retiree, Queens College*

Do you remember where you were when Super Storm Sandy hit New York on Oct., 28, 2012? This year, on the fifth anniversary of that storm, approximately 5,000 people (30 PSCers strong) marched across the Brooklyn Bridge to commemorate Sandy with a day of activities entitled, WE REMEMBER, WE RISE, WE RESIST. Marchers went over to the Smith Houses on the Lower East Side where some families are still not back home after 5 years! Named for the former governor of New York, these twelve public towers were built in the early 1950s as a way to provide better housing for tenement dwellers in the area between the two bridges. Five years later, reduced public spending and lack of priorities following the hurricane, has left reconstruction of damaged apartments in one 17-story building still incomplete.



PSC at the Sandy Fifth Anniversary March.

Keeping with the theme of WE REMEMBER, WE RISE, WE RESIST, participants honored the resilience of the most damaged communities and the terrific work of our first responders. The five thousand marchers, many dressed in blue, came in waves to send a strong message to the Governor, the Mayor and Senator

Schumer to think of the future by honoring the commitments they have made in the Paris Climate Agreement. The Mayor and the Governor had promised to move NYS and City to a fossil-free power grid by 2030. The coalition of marchers was united in urging that this be done with all deliberate speed and with trained union labor.

PSC's additional messages included: rebuilding Puerto Rico's energy grid with Renewable Energy and canceling Puerto Rico's debt; solar cells for all NYC public buildings, installed with union labor; and divesting NY pensions from fossil fuels. PSC had an impressive contingent thanks to Hostos and the Retiree Chapter. SEIU also had a strong presence but the day belonged to grassroots communities and environmental groups.

The **PSC Environmental Justice Working Group** will continue its work with CUNY campuses and in the Coalition to Divest NY. The next meeting is at the **PSC on Mon., Dec. 11 at 6 pm**. All are welcome.

## CURRENT EVENTS

### WELCOMING THE NEW YORK HEALTH ACT (Almost)

*-Francine Brewer, retiree, LaGuardia CC*

The New York Health Act is a universal single payer health plan. It would provide guaranteed health care for all New Yorkers. Coverage would be universal and comprehensive. It establishes a State fund that would cover every resident. Financial barriers to receiving health care would no longer be commonplace. Insurance premiums would be eliminated. There would be no deductibles and no co-pays.

The New York Health Act (A5062/S3525) was introduced in the New York State Legislature by Assembly Member Richard Gottfried, chair of the Assembly Committee on Health in 2015. It was passed in the Assembly in 2015, 2016 and 2017. Senator

Gustavo Rivera is the sponsor of the bill in the State Senate. The Senate bill has 30 co-sponsors (32 votes are needed to pass).

The law provides for quality health care for everyone who lives in New York State. In addition to health care services from doctors and hospitals that we receive now, prescription drugs, dental, vision, mental health, reproductive care and long-term care would be included. We would have free choice of doctors and hospitals (no more out-of-network charges).

How could the law implement the benefits explained above? The way the program is financed is crucial to its success. It is publicly funded. Government funds from Medicare, Medicaid, CHIP and ACA would be transferred to New York State. A progressive payroll tax would be instituted (employers would pay 80%; employees would pay 20% of the tax). Non-payroll income would also be taxed. Medicare Part B and Part D premiums, as well as the local share of Medicaid, would be paid by the New York Health Act.



The law saves money even though everyone would receive comprehensive health care coverage. An economic analysis prepared by Prof. Gerald Friedman (UMass/Amherst) shows that the New York Health Act “would reduce overall health care spending by 15%, or \$25 billion, per year by 2019.” How would the savings be

achieved? Administrative costs of insurance companies, doctors, and hospitals would be reduced drastically. Bulk purchasing of drugs and medical devices would also save money. Reducing fraud is another way to reduce costs and save money. State-wide bulk savings also raises questions about the role of union welfare funds. We will return to this in future issues of Turning the Page. Stay tuned.

Meanwhile, the Campaign for New York Health Act is underway, and PSC Retirees are active participants. For more information, go to: [nyhealthact.com/](http://nyhealthact.com/)

## WATCH OUT: THE GOP TAX PLAN

-Dave Kotelchuck, retiree, Hunter

While the tax bill may be over and done by the time we go to press, we need to keep our eyes open for the ways the “Tax Reform” packages (Senate & House) directly target retired Americans and those, elderly among them, who have major medical expenses. But because some of the changes in these tax provisions are buried in the fine print of the bills, many retirees don’t realize that we too are specifically targeted. The GOP strategy is to change many tax provisions at once—to keep many legislative balls in the air—so that most Americans will be confused about how much they will owe in taxes if this bill passes. Here are some of the changes:

- **Hit Number 1.** The current Consumer Price Index (CPI) will be dropped in favor of the more slowly rising Chained CPI. *This means a smaller increase in our annual Social Security benefits to keep up with inflation.* Income tax brackets are also indexed to inflation, so that over time taxpayer bills will more rapidly creep into higher tax brackets. And personal exemptions, which are now linked to the CPI for all members of a family, would be replaced by a mix of

standard deductions and child tax credits, which are only partially indexed to the new Chained CPI.

- **Hit Number 2.** *The personal tax exemption for high medical costs will be eliminated.* Of the proposed cuts in current personal tax exemptions, this is the most cruel. Persons and families who spend more than 10 percent of their annual income on medical costs—including those caring for children and adults with disabilities and/or chronic conditions—are the most deserving of financial help. They are in the crosshairs of the GOP bill. Also, we know that medical costs for all persons rise as we enter old age, but that Medicare can still leave us with hefty medical bills. *More than half of those currently filing for tax relief under this provision are over the age of 65, according to the AARP (NY Times 11/9/17, p. A16).*
- **Hit Number 3.** As residents of New York and other neighboring states, we pay high state and local taxes to support public services. *The bills would eliminate federal tax exemption for state and local income taxes.* We would thereby be paying taxes on our taxes—a pretty kettle of fish! Also for us New Yorkers, a large portion of State revenue comes from taxes on Wall Street. Would such a federal tax provision drive more wealthy NYS residents to lower tax states, further decreasing the State tax base? Quite possibly. We currently need to impose higher state and local taxes on the wealthy since they don't pay their fair share now, but not face such a federal tax on all of us.

THE BOTTOM LINE: All the above tax provisions are unfair, and the proposed tax on the medically impoverished is cruel. But any or all of these might be changed or eliminated from the bill during the legislative process. What will not be changed, what cannot be

changed short of its defeat, is *the core goal of the bill: To lower taxes on corporations and the wealthy, requiring the rest of us to pay more taxes, both in the short and long run, to make up for the resulting budget shortfall.* In essence, the 99% will have to pay more taxes to fund a tax cut for the 1%. This is truly the core outrage of the GOP tax bill in the House. The goal of the Senate tax bill is no different. In our attacks on the bills' tax increase provisions, we should never lose sight of this. These bills are truly outrageous. They deserve immediate unceremonious burials.



## NEWS & NOTES FROM THE WELFARE FUND

### Patrick Smith, Communications Director, Accessing your improved benefits *Guardian Dental*

Go to [guardiananytime.com](http://guardiananytime.com) and click on "Find a Provider" for the Guardian PPO, or see the **Recommended Dentists** on the Welfare Fund website, [psccunywf.org](http://psccunywf.org). Or call 800-848-4567. Make an appointment. You don't need an individual ID card. Simply provide the Group Plan number, **381084**, to your dental office at the first visit. Members enrolled in the Delta Dental HMO simply call the dentist assigned by Delta to make an appointment.

### *Davis Vision*

Go to [davisvision.com](http://davisvision.com) and use the "Find a Doctor" feature, or call 800-999-5431. Identify yourself as a PSC-CUNY Welfare Fund member or dependent and Davis

Vision member. Provide the office with your name, SS#, and the name and date of birth of any covered member/dependent needing services. The provider's office will verify your eligibility to make an appointment.

### **HearUSA**

To make an appointment with a HearUSA hearing aid provider, contact HearUSA, (800) 442-8231, and let HearUSA know that you are a member of the PSC-CUNY Welfare Fund. You will be given the names of three participating HearUSA practitioners in your area and the nearest store.

**This just in from Donna Costs, Executive Director:**

### **New Shingles Vaccine**

Retirees over 65 covered under the Welfare Fund's Silverscripts Medicare D plan are eligible to get the shingles shot at any pharmacy that offers the shot. If they go to a doctor's office it will not be covered by the plan's Medicare D, but may be covered under their Medicare B coverage.

### **TIAA TAX TIP**

-Robert Cowen, retiree, Queens College

Optional Retirement Plans (ORP) are fully exempt from New York State Income Taxes. This means that retirees with TIAA contracts can note this in preparing taxes. In January, TIAA will send a letter with information about which of your contracts are ORPs. Other TIAA contract income can be included in the general \$20,000 exemption too.

Look for the letter from TIAA in the new year and for more information in Turning the Page.

**BOOK CORNER.** Ingrid Blaufarb Hughes, retiree from BMCC, has written a book about her son who lived with

schizophrenia and, after years of struggle, took his own life. *Losing Aaron*, which tells the story of the reverberation of this illness through the family, is available through Amazon.



### **GIVE FLORIDIANS A SECOND CHANCE**

*Peter Hogness, the retired editor of Clarion, writes about a petition campaign to place an amendment on the 2018 Florida ballot. The Voting Restoration Amendment would allow convicted felons who've paid their debt to society to earn back their right to vote. He explains how Florida retirees, snowbirds or those of us who have relatives or friends in the state can help.*

More than 1.5 million people in Florida are denied the right to vote because of a past felony conviction. That's twice the statewide margin of victory in the last five presidential elections *combined*. Of all the people in the US who can't vote due to felony disenfranchisement laws, more than 25% live in Florida.

Here's some good news: despite the destruction of Hurricane Irma, by mid-October organizers had gathered about 600,000 of the 766,000 signatures that are legally required to put an amendment to the Florida constitution on the ballot that would restore these voting rights. Organizers say they actually need 1 million signatures by mid-December, to ensure that their petitions can withstand any possible challenges. So the goal is within reach! (The coalition organizing this campaign, Floridians for a Fair Democracy, includes the League of Women Voters, the NAACP, ACLU, Faith in Florida, and more – see below for more info.)

**Do you have friends or family in Florida** (or know organizations) who might help with this campaign? That could mean going to a shopping center or football game to collect signatures – or it might just mean carrying the petition during the day, and asking their friends and family to sign. It all adds up!

If you know someone who might volunteer, forward them this message, and ask them to email [restorethevoteflorida@gmail.com](mailto:restorethevoteflorida@gmail.com), or call 321-405-3035. (If you CC [restorethevoteflorida@gmail.com](mailto:restorethevoteflorida@gmail.com) when you email them, an organizer will follow up directly.)

All volunteers will be sent some blank petitions, self-addressed stamped envelopes to return them, and a sample script that shows a straightforward way to talk with voters about this. They'll also get a one-page outline of key points about the issue, and suggestions on good places and times to collect signatures. (You must be a registered Florida voter to sign, but *anyone* can gather signatures.)

Do you know people registered to vote in Florida who probably won't volunteer, but would sign the petition themselves? Please ask them to download an individual petition from [floridiansforafairdemocracy.com/](http://floridiansforafairdemocracy.com/), **fill it out completely**, and mail it in. Or if they'd rather request an individual petition by phone, they can call 321-405-3035. Either way, ask them to let you know when it's done. Thanks!

P.S. Here are some links with more information on this campaign:

[tinyurl.com/FL-voting-rights-2m](http://tinyurl.com/FL-voting-rights-2m)

[tinyurl.com/South-restore-voting](http://tinyurl.com/South-restore-voting)

[tinyurl.com/Yes-to-2nd-chances](http://tinyurl.com/Yes-to-2nd-chances)

## EDITOR'S NOTE

As we close out this year with an ever expanding edition of Turning the Page, we note that not all articles are joyous. To correct for this, we are calling on all artists and would-be cartoonists to submit cartoons to us: [retirees@pscmail.org](mailto:retirees@pscmail.org)

Let's brighten the new year.

**RETIREES CHAPTER**  
of the *Professional Staff Congress*  
cordially invites you to attend its  
Annual Winter Luncheon

**Monday, January 8, 2018**

12:30 PM

Dining Hall, 2<sup>nd</sup> floor  
John Jay College of Criminal Justice  
524 West 59<sup>th</sup> Street

**Speaker:**

**Prof. Kim Phillips-Fein (NYU)**

author of

*Fear City: New York's Fiscal Crisis and the Rise of Austerity Politics*

**MENU**

Tossed Salad, Hot Rolls

**Choice of:** Chicken Francese, Tropical Salad, Tuna Salad,  
Vegetable Lasagna, Poached Salmon, Pepper Steak

Vegetables, Dessert, Beverages, Wine Bar

**Directions:** John Jay's New Building (accessible from 899 Tenth Avenue, 524 West 59th Street, or follow directions below).

**Best entrance:** 11th Avenue between 58th & 59th Streets.

**Transit:** Bus: M57 to 11th Avenue (transfer from any subway line with a 57th or 59th Street stop).

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**RESERVATION FORM:**

I/We plan to attend. Enclosed is my reservation for \_\_\_\_\_ luncheon(s) at \$26 each.

My choice of main course is (check one for each person who will attend):

Chicken Francese \_\_\_\_\_ Tropical Salad \_\_\_\_\_ Tuna Salad- \_\_\_\_\_  
Vegetable Lasagna \_\_\_\_\_ Poached Salmon \_\_\_\_\_ Pepper Steak \_\_\_\_\_

Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Please send your reservation form with a check payable to: Professional Staff Congress.

Mail by Dec. 29 to: Retirees Chapter/ Professional Staff Congress/ 61 Broadway, 15<sup>th</sup> floor/ New York, NY 10006.