



Joan Greenbaum, Editor
Academic Year 2016-7 No. 9

psc-cuny.org/retirees

MAY CHAPTER MEETING,
MONDAY, MAY 1, 1 – 3 PM, PSC
Union Hall, 16th Floor, 61 Broadway.
Theme: The surveillance
state. We'll examine government
surveillance in the 1950s and
contemporary New York.

Speakers:

Dave Kotelchuck, Hunter College,
retired, author of *Abe and Julia*, on
FBI surveillance of his family during
the McCarthy period.

Alex Vitale, Brooklyn College, on
NYPD surveillance of Muslims,
including CUNY students. Professor
Vitale has written extensively on
“broken windows” policing, protest
policing and social movements.

As always, we will provide an
assortment of light refreshments.

LUNCHEON, MONDAY, JUNE 5
12 PM, PSC Union Hall, 16th Floor,
61 Broadway.

Speaker: Blanche Wiesen Cook,
Distinguished Professor of History at
John Jay College and the CUNY
Graduate Center.

Professor Cook just published the
third and final volume of her award-
winning and critically acclaimed
biography of Eleanor Roosevelt.

The venue has changed for this
year's June luncheon. John Jay was
not available, so we'll be breaking
bread at the PSC Union Hall.



We are providing a buffet luncheon
with a more varied and excellent
menu – and at lower cost. **There will**
be a 10:30 AM coffee hour
preceding the luncheon. The
coffee hour is our yearly round up of
what we as a chapter have done and
what we plan to do. All are welcome.

There was a surge of reservations after we announced the event in the April newsletter. We are limited to 100 seats, so we may not be able to honor reservations received after May 8.* For a reservation form, see page 10 of this newsletter or visit <https://tinyurl.com/June17Luncheon>.

*After May 8, call the PSC (212-354-1252) and ask for Sharon Tonge to find out if seats are still available.

**PEOPLE'S CLIMATE MARCH,
SATURDAY, APRIL 29,
WASHINGTON, D.C.**

A few reduced-cost seats are left on the PSC buses to Washington leaving from downtown Manhattan and Brooklyn. To reserve a place and make your payment, go to <https://tinyurl.com/PSCbusses>.

To learn more about the march and PSC participation, go to psc-cuny.org/environmental-justice-committee. There is information on that web page on how to hook up with the PSC contingent if you are not traveling to Washington on a PSC bus.

**PLAN RETIREE PROGRAMS FOR
2017-18 ACADEMIC YEAR, MAY 8**

Our program committee will meet at **1 PM, May 8** at the PSC office to begin planning programs for the next academic year. Members are welcome to join us. If you have suggestions for programs and/or wish to attend the meeting, email us a retirees@pscmail.org.

**METS VS. GIANTS at CITI FIELD
MAY 10, 1 PM.**



Join us at this Wednesday day game that promises to be a winner. Tickets are \$25. Reservations are due May 2. Email retirees@pscmail.org with METS in the subject line, and bring a check to the May 1 chapter meeting.

**BUILDING INTERGENERATIONAL
BRIDGES, MAY 19, 4:30-7:30**

at the Murphy Institute, 25 W. 43rd St 18th floor. Millennials and Baby Boomers have much in common, particularly when it comes to defending and expanding the safety net across generations. Speakers include Kevin Stump of Young Invincibles, and Ruth Milkman and Ed Ott of the Murphy Institute, along with music by the Raging Grannies. Enjoy and engage: RSVP at jsmi-sharedstruggles.eventbrite.com.

THE MONTH THAT WAS New Welfare Fund Benefits

Irwin Yellowitz,
Retiree, CCNY

At the Retirees Chapter meeting on April 3, Donna Costa, the new executive director of the PSC-CUNY Welfare Fund, and Patrick Smith, the Fund's communications director, discussed new expanded benefits that began on January 1, 2017. Patrick Smith provided a detailed PowerPoint presentation on the changes in the dental, hearing aid and vision plans. The changes improved the plans in significant ways, and were made possible by increased monies provided to the Welfare Fund in the PSC's recent contract, and by savings to the Welfare Fund from the shift of the adjunct health plan to New York City.

All in-service and retired members of the Welfare Fund have received mailings detailing the changes, but if you would like to check on any point, visit the Welfare Fund's website for complete information, <http://www.pscunywf.org>. Members with a particular issue or problem can reach the Welfare Fund staff at 212-354-5230.

Len Rodberg: Medicare for All

April's chapter meeting was a double-header. Following the detailed information about our expanded benefits, we heard Len Rodberg, recently retired from the Urban Studies Department at Queens College, give us a provocative and thoughtful PowerPoint presentation. He reviewed the fundamentals of

Obamacare, sketched the major changes proposed in Ryan/Trumpcare, and ultimately argued for the superiority of a single-payer system in providing health care for the greatest number of people at the least cost. Rodberg called for support of the single-payer bill presently before the New York State Senate, not only for its impact in this state, but as a significant step toward a national single-payer system. Richard Gottfried, the initiator of the insurance-company-free bill, was a guest speaker for our chapter last year, and now the New York Health Act, is only two votes shy of passage in the State Senate. It has passed the Assembly several years in a row.



Rodberg opened and closed his remarks with a basic principle: health care should be a *right for everyone*. Of the major industrial countries, only the United States does not accept this as the basis for public policy.

Obamacare accepts the principle, but failed in practice. First, it provides a public program of health insurance for the poor through Medicaid, but leaves it to the states

to implement. A good number refused. Secondly, the non-poor receive health insurance through private companies, which limits the program's reach since the insurance companies face increased costs in covering the previously uninsured. The high costs have led many companies to drop out, or increase premiums to unacceptable levels.

Obamacare did take important steps forward by mandating participation, although that has not been well implemented. The program succeeded in providing subsidies for Americans to buy health care policies; expanding Medicaid to many more people; requiring essential benefits in any health insurance policy; and closing the 'donut hole' for drug purchases by seniors. Will this progress be undone by Ryan/Trumpcare?

Although stalled at the moment, Ryan/Trumpcare almost certainly will return. And return in various smaller but sneaky ways (see next article). Rodberg pointed out that it does not accept the principle of health care as a right for all, but instead would return to a private insurance market for most Americans and sharply reduced funding for Medicaid. Together these actions would lower the number of Americans now covered in a major way. The nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office estimates that would mean an immediate loss of health insurance for approximately 14 million people, with 24 million losing coverage over a 10 year period. This negative outcome was an important reason for citizens urging their

Congressional representatives to defeat Ryan/Trumpcare.

Rodberg argued forcefully that a single-payer insurance system is the best solution to the many complex issues involved in providing health care for all. Medicare is a largely single-payer system, and it has worked exceedingly well. Why? Rodberg offered these reasons: 1) government funding that reduces the role of private companies, simplifying the insurance marketplace and reducing overhead costs; 2) regulations that are universal, rather than differing among insurance companies – an outcome that cuts costs and increases efficiency; and 3) a single market for medical services and drugs that leads to significantly lower costs.



Rodberg concluded that a single-payer system, such as the bill proposed by Assemblyman Richard Gottfried in New York, would cover everyone more efficiently than under any existing system, and at a lower cost per patient. He provided figures for New York that show that Gottfried's single-payer system

would reduce health care costs by 11.8% (see March *Turning the Page*; bill number Gottfried A 5062/ Rivera S 3525). Rodberg would not predict its passage this year, but he called for increasing the pressure for single-payer legislation in New York, with the twin aims of achieving it here soon, and as a step toward Medicare for All in the United States.

Editor's note: Len Rodberg has prepared an article on this subject for an upcoming issue of the Clarion.

Rodberg's presentation was enhanced by an excellent PowerPoint presentation, which you can request by emailing retirees@pscmail.org -- with PowerPoint in the subject line.

OBAMACARE REPEAL WOULD ALSO DEplete MEDICARE TRUST FUND

*Dave Kotelchuck,
Retiree, Hunter*

Millions of Americans, especially the 24 million who would have lost their health insurance entirely, celebrated the recent defeat of the Trump/Ryan bill attacking and undermining the Affordable Care Act (ACA), also known as Obamacare. Of the 24 million, about half would have lost their coverage through cutbacks in Medicaid, a program which covers health care costs for persons who are poor and/or need nursing home or at-home care.

But what many Americans don't know is that the Trump/Ryan bill would also have depleted the *Medicare Hospital Insurance Trust*

Fund. Medicare currently covers health care costs for 14% of all Americans, those 65 years of age or over, as well as many disabled persons.



Medicare is funded by payroll taxes. The total payroll tax comes to 2.9%, split evenly between workers and their employers, or paid in full by self-employed persons. To shore up the Medicare Trust Fund, as well as help pay for improved Medicaid coverage, President Obama and Congress added an increase of 0.9% to this payroll tax for individuals earning above \$200,000 annually and couples above \$250,000, for a total Medicare tax of 3.8%.

The Trump/Ryan bill proposed eliminating this 0.9% tax for higher-income Americans. If passed (or if a full ACA repeal is passed) this would cut the depletion date for Medicare's Hospital Insurance Trust Fund by four years, from 2028 to 2024. Two-thirds of the benefits of this regressive cut would go to millionaires, saving each over \$10,000 on average, according to the Tax Policy Center. Medicare's financing would be further undermined by increased hospital use by the 24 million newly uninsured, since Medicare funds contribute to the "disproportionate

share” fund paid to hospitals serving many uninsured persons.

As with many other aspects of the Administration’s bill, those of moderate and low income would lose coverage or receive less secure coverage in order to cut taxes for the wealthy. This is obscene.

And don’t be surprised if the Administration comes back with another version of the Trump/Ryan bill, which was just defeated. Administration and Congressional leaders are negotiating now with members of the Republican “Freedom Caucus,” not with so-called moderate Republicans or with Democratic members of Congress. Future versions of this bill may even be worse. *En garde*, retirees.

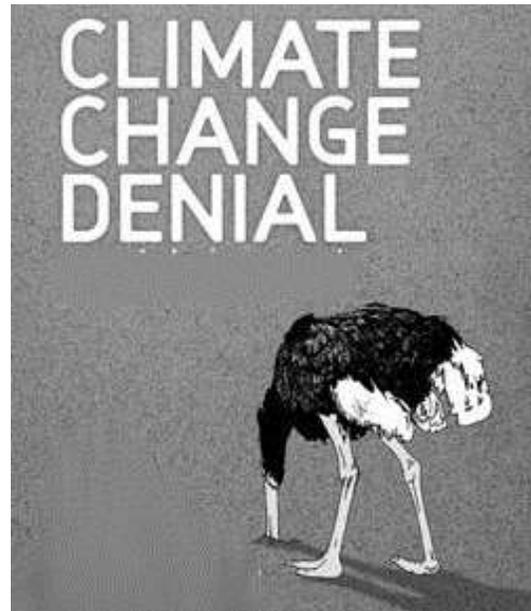
Editor's note: Dave Kotelchuck is a member of our chapter's Social Safety Net working group which is involved in visiting congressional representatives to preserve and expand benefits. If you would like to join this group, please email us with SAFETY NET in the subject line.

Climate Crisis Reaching New Heights

*Joan Greenbaum, Retiree
LaGuardia Community College*

As we go to press you may be participating in this year's critical People's Climate March (April 29). There are so many attacks on the climate that it is often difficult to know where to start, but Trump's budget blueprint delineates the

Administration’s plans to dismantle research.



According to the *New York Times* (April 10, 2017) Trump’s budget “proposed eliminating four of [NASA](#)’s climate science missions, including instruments to study clouds, small airborne particles, the flow of carbon dioxide and other elements of the atmosphere and oceans." It eliminates funding for launching new satellites to provide essential climate data on ice flows, wind patterns and other factors. Since these funding cuts would only amount to a tiny price tag of \$102 million, a drop in the total budget, it sends an unfortunately clear message to earth scientists, denying climate change down to the basics of essential data. This budget dismantling reaches down to all scientists using NASA data, including CUNY faculty and students.

Immigrant Rights in Action

*Bill Friedheim
Retired, BMCC*

“WE ARE ALL RAVI!” Ravi Ragbir is a study in constant motion, often working twelve-hour days providing counsel and comfort for immigrants facing detention and deportation.

His advocacy comes with a title: Executive Director of the New Sanctuary Coalition, an interfaith network of congregations and activists. But his activism is deeply personal, interacting every day with immigrants and families facing the trauma of breakup, separation and deportation – a trauma he faced on March 9 when summoned to Federal Plaza by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) for his own biannual check-in.

Ravi and his wife Amy (an immigration lawyer) have lived with the threat of his deportation for years. When he and Amy showed up at ICE on March 9, they were not alone. Five hundred immigrant rights activists chanted, “We are all Ravi!” More than a dozen faith leaders and elected officials escorted Ravi and Amy into the building.

I, too, was there because it is personal. Ravi and Amy are dear friends. But I was also there, as were 500 other New Yorkers, because at this moment in our history, there is a moral imperative that Americans stand in solidarity with immigrants.

Ravi was not detained. Ominously, however, ICE instructed him to return April 11 with a letter from the

Trinidadian consulate indicating that he has applied to renew his passport. When an immigrant has an active passport, it enables ICE to fast track a deportation, sometimes on the same day that an immigrant reports.



Ravi came to the United States from Trinidad and Tobago twenty-six years ago. He applied for and was granted green card status. A decade later he was working as a loan processor for a mortgage lender and, there, his life took a very wrong turn. Charged with conspiracy to commit wire fraud in 2001, Ravi maintained that he performed as instructed by the bank for which he worked. His bosses accepted a plea bargain. Ravi, on the other hand, proclaimed his innocence, contested the charge, lost and served jail time. Upon release, a judge ordered deportation. While Ravi appealed, he was put in mandatory indefinite detention, most of which was in a private prison for immigrants in Alabama, a thousand miles removed from his family.

Ravi benefitted from excellent legal assistance, most recently by a legal team of professors and students from NYU Law School. Lawyers secured his release from detention

and, in 2011, took advantage of a new policy of *prosecutorial discretion* by the Obama administration. The Obama administration had a mixed record on immigration (e.g. deporting more immigrants than any other president), but *prosecutorial discretion*, according to the online newspaper, *Gothamist*, allowed “ICE deportation officers to differentiate between violent criminals and low-level offenders, and to toss out certain cases, like those involving an immigrant with a ‘very long-term presence’ in the country or children who are U.S. citizens.”

Invoking *prosecutorial discretion*, ICE in New York stayed his *removal*, eventually requiring him to report only every other year. The judge and prosecutor in his wire fraud case have both written letters on his behalf. All of this, however, is about to change under the Trump administration.

There is no sugar coating that Ravi made a big mistake in life. He paid for it, serving time behind bars. But as faith and political leaders, and—more importantly—hundreds of grateful immigrants will testify, Ravi, as Executive Director of the New Sanctuary Coalition, has done the work of angels. Because of that work, he has a target on his back.



On April 7, Ravi’s defense team sent a message to his supporters:

He [Ravi] complied with ICE’s request to submit proof of his application for travel documents, and ICE has moved his check in date to January 2018, prior to the expiration of his current stay of removal. Ravi’s defense committee also submitted a packet requesting ICE’s continued exercise of prosecutorial discretion in his case through and beyond the current stay of removal.

Good news! Ravi does not have to report to ICE for another nine months. But he still lives with the constant threat that ICE has the discretionary power to subject him to deportation at a moment’s notice. Within this ominous reality, however, there is a positive thread: Hundreds of supporters have his back.

“We are all Ravi.”

TWO IMPORTANT RETIREE ORGANIZATIONS: COMRO AND NY SENIOR ACTION.

*John Hyland, Retiree
LaGuardia Community College*

Our chapter works closely with several retiree organizations and advocacy groups. John Hyland, our vice chair, urges support for two of the most important: COMRO and NY Senior Action

Support the Council of Municipal Retiree Organizations (COMRO) at its annual awards luncheon on Friday, June 23, 12 – 2 PM at the UFT, 52 Broadway, 19th floor.

COMRO brings together retiree representatives from many NYC public-sector unions, including the PSC, to educate and advocate on retiree issues (pensions, healthcare, Social Safety Net).

This year COMRO honors:

- Doris Welch, President, NYS Alliance of Retired Americans, NYC Chapter
- Stuart Eber, President, NYC Managerial Employees Association
- Ginger Adams Otis, Labor Columnist, *Daily News*

Luncheon: \$40 per person, checks payable to COMRO, mail to Chair Michael O'Keefe, 241-15 88th Ave. Bellerose, NY 11426.

Join the NY Statewide Senior Action Council (The PSC Retiree Chapter is an affiliate). SSAC is a strong information and advocacy organization, which sponsors important programs for seniors such as the Medicare Patient's Rights Helpline (1-800-333-4374), and provides timely analyses of federal, state, and city funding and legislation that affect all seniors. You can contact SSAC at 518-436-1006.

EDITOR'S NOTE: We are nearing the end of the first academic year where we send out *Turning the Page* in both an email edition and in a paper version. The decision to produce a paper copy was made last June by members attending the coffee hour preceding the luncheon. It appears that for members living in the Metropolitan area, seeing the paper page seems to have drawn in more people to our monthly chapter meeting. We would be interested in hearing from you at the May or June meetings. We would also like to hear from those of you outside the immediate area to find out if you enjoy seeing the paper copy, and learn if there are other issues you would like to read and/or write about. As always, please write to us at retirees@pscmail.org with NEWSLETTER in the subject line.

**RETIREES LUNCHEON,
MONDAY, JUNE 5.**

*Turn the page for a
reservation form →→*

RETIRES CHAPTER

of the
PROFESSIONAL STAFF CONGRESS

cordially invites you
to attend its
Twenty-fourth Annual
Spring Luncheon

Monday, June 5, 2017

10:30 AM
Coffee Hour

12:00 PM Luncheon

Professional Staff Congress
Union Hall/ 16th Floor
61 Broadway
New York, NY 10006

MENU

Buffet Luncheon

Assorted Salads

Choice of:

Grilled Salmon

Filet Mignon

Seasonal Roasted Vegetables

Herb Roasted Chicken Breast

Shrimp Skewers

Fennel Barbecue Chicken Breast

Meat and Fish Entrees

Served with Vegetables

Dessert

Beverages

RESERVATION FORM

Space is limited. Reserve early.

I/We plan to attend. Enclosed is my
reservation for _____ luncheon(s)
at \$20.00 each.

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

___ Grilled Salmon

___ Filet Mignon

___ Roasted Vegetables

___ Roasted Chicken Breast

___ Shrimp Skewers

___ Barbecue Chicken Breast

Name(s) _____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

Phone Number: _____

Please send your reservation form with
a check payable to:

Professional Staff Congress

by

May 8, 2017

Retirees Chapter

Professional Staff Congress

61 Broadway, 15th floor

New York, NY 10006