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psc-cuny.org/retirees.org

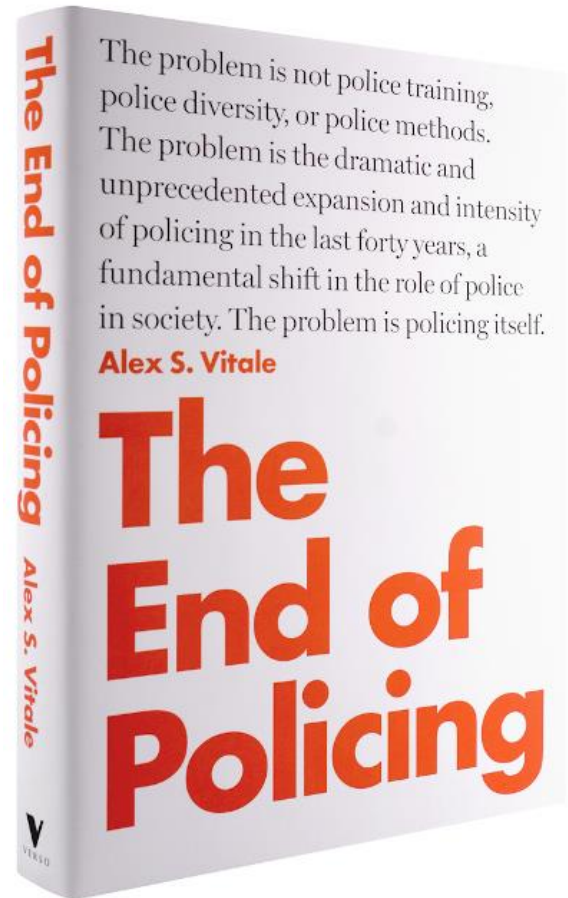
**VIRTUAL CHAPTER MEETING
MONDAY NOVEMBER. 1 PM
ZOOM.**

The chapter meeting will be in two parts.
1 PM. Policing in our cities and its alternatives. Speakers listed below.
2:30 PM. Updates on **retiree healthcare changes.**

In response to the Black Lives Matter movement, activists, policy makers and academics are focusing intensely on the role of police in our society. Our panel will address the realities of policing on the ground in our cities, especially in New York City. Panelists will discuss police brutality and the expansion of the role of law enforcement into areas of mental health and drugs.

Alex S. Vitale is professor of sociology and coordinator of the Policing and Social Justice Project at Brooklyn College. He has spent the last 25 years writing about policing and consults both

police departments and human rights organizations internationally. He is the author of *City of Disorder: How the Quality of Life Campaign Transformed New York Politics* and *The End of Policing*. His writings have appeared in *The New York Times*, *The Nation*, *NY Daily News*, and *USA Today*.



Christina Sparrock, is a certified public accountant and mental health advocate for the Fountain House. She has worked with the NYC Police Department on de-escalation techniques and crisis intervention when dealing with those in emotional crisis.

Jawanza Williams is a social justice activist and the director of youth organizing for Voices of Community Activists and Leaders (VOCAL-NY), a

grassroots organization that advocates for social reform in policing, the treatment of narcotics users and aiding victims of housing insecurity. □



NEWS ABOUT THE SHIFT OF RETIREE HEALTH CARE COVERAGE TO MEDICARE ADVANTAGE:

A NYS JUDGE HAS ISSUED A TEMPORARY RESTRAINING ORDER EXTENDING THE ENROLLMENT PERIOD BEYOND OCTOBER 31

Justice Lyle E. Frank issued a Temporary Restraining Order on Thursday, October 21. He noted that the "Court feels that the method of implementation of this plan at present has been irrational, and thus arbitrary and capricious" He ruled:

"ORDERED that the respondents are enjoined from enforcing the October 31, 2021 Opt-Out/ Opt-In date; and it is further

ORDERED that petitioners maintain the status-quo enrollment until the respondents cure deficiencies with the

implementation of the proposed new Medicare Advantage Plan, and it is further

ORDERED that such new plan be sent to this Court for this Court to review and determine whether such plan cures the defects as indicated above, and it is further

ORDERED that such plan be sent to the petitioner's counsel seven days prior to such submission to the Court and petitioner may then provide any input regarding the proposed new plan to the Court."

But the "**Court has upheld the process used to pick the Alliance, so the entire process will not need to begin anew.**" In effect, he ruled against Aetna and UnitedHealthCare, two companies filing suit that had submitted losing bids for the Medicare Advantage contract.

Here is what we know: (1) The enrollment period has been extended into November and maybe beyond. (2) The Alliance remains as the Medicare Advantage vendor.

What still has to be determined: The court's review and acceptance of a new plan submitted by the vendor and the City to "cure deficiencies with the implementation of the proposed new Medicare Advantage Plan." Will this also impact whether those who opt to keep their current NYC plan must pay a premium? Will the City and the vendor appeal the judge's ruling? We don't know. □

UPCOMING MEETINGS

BELLE ZELLER SCHOLARSHIP AWARDS CEREMONY, DECEMBER 8TH 7 P.M.

Marcia Newfield, BMCC

The Belle Zeller Scholarship Trust Fund was established in 1979 to honor our union's founder. Each year the Fund gives scholarships to exceptional CUNY students who exemplify, as Belle Zeller did, a dual commitment to scholarship and social service. Up to now, 380 students have received these scholarships.



Belle Zeller

This year the Fund is awarding scholarships to twelve scholars in a variety of fields: Psychology, Urban Education, Sociology, Finance, Law, Chemistry, Economics, English, Spanish, and Biomedical Science.

It is celebrating the awards virtually on Wednesday, December 8 from 7-8 p.m., honoring individuals who have helped CUNY: New York State Attorney General Letitia James, Senator Andrew

Gournades, and Assemblymember Karines Reyes. This year the Belle Zeller Lifetime Achievement Award will be given to Dr. Joanne Waldstreicher, a Brooklyn College chemistry summa cum laude graduate, who was one of the first three Belle Zeller scholarship winners and has played a prominent role in developing the Johnson & Johnson COVID-19 vaccine. The event will conclude with a musical presentation by harpist Emily John of the Aaron Copland School of Music at Queens College.

Go to <https://bellezeller.org/> and please support this event and the Fund: Buy a \$100 ticket to attend the December 8 virtual ceremony, buy an ad, sponsor a table or even a scholarship. The Fund is entirely self-supporting, so every donation, no matter how small, makes a difference.

CUNY retirees are urged to support the Fund and attend the event. □

PROGRESS AT NYSUT RETIREE COUNCIL CONFERENCE

Dave Kotelchuck, Hunter

The New York State United Teachers (NYSUT) is the PSC's state affiliate. Retirees from NYSUT locals across the state are part of its statewide Retiree Council. NYSUT retirees are divided into geographic districts. PSC retirees are in RC District 37-38. Dave Kotelchuck, who wrote this report, is President of RC 37-38.

The PSC delegation made progress in three important areas in resolutions passed at the Fall 2021 NYSUT Retiree Council conference: NYSUT member education about single-payer healthcare

bill, transparency when locals consider changes in their health insurance plans, and divestment from fossil fuels by the NYS Teachers' Retirement System (TRS). The conference was held on Zoom October 4-5, and a full delegation of PSC delegates and alternates representing Retiree Council 37-38 attended.

Our RC 37-38 submitted two resolutions to the meeting. The first, entitled "Oppose Privatization of Medicare," concluded with two resolves: NYSUT should reaffirm its opposition to the privatization of Medicare and its commitment to fight for federal and state legislation moving our country toward healthcare coverage for all. Dave Kotelchuck, RC 37-38 President, introduced it.

The second resolution, entitled "Informing Retirees about Healthcare Options," resolved that NYSUT educate members about single-payer plans at the national as well as local levels, work with affiliates to identify organized labor's requirements in a single-payer system; and support President Biden's Medicare expansion proposal. This was introduced by Eileen Moran, RC 37-38 Vice President.

Floor discussion revealed broad support for Eileen's resolution, but significant opposition to the Medicare privatization one, led by the UFT retirees local, NYSUT's largest. During the Resolutions Committee meeting which followed, a number of Upstate NYSUT locals expressed concern that their Medicare Advantage plans had been changed over time without consulting them – a problem faced by NYC retiree members as well. After some

negotiation, Dave agreed to merge our "privatization" resolution into Eileen's "informing retirees" resolution, with the added resolve that "NYSUT encourages their locals to inform retiree members when their local is considering changes to retiree health insurance." When introduced on the floor the next day, this amended resolution was passed virtually unanimously.

Also passed unanimously was an environmental resolution introduced by RC 10 of the Albany region reaffirming NYSUT's support for fossil fuel divestment by TRS in a "fiducially responsible manner."

Repeal the Reagan Era Cuts!



Finally, of special note among the many NYSUT officers and others who spoke at the conference, Roger Boudreau, President of the Rhode Island AFT Retirees, told us about the growing movement to repeal Social Security cutbacks enacted in 1983 by the Reagan Administration. These changes cut benefits to public employees and their spouses who were part of state retiree programs instead of federal Social Security. Such state programs were allowed under the original 1936 Social Security Act. Many of these state programs have since faltered, as in

Rhode Island and Illinois, leaving retired state and municipal employees with reduced Social Security benefits. Boudreau asked NYSUT retirees to sign a petition to repeal the Reagan cutbacks, which is available at: <https://sign.moveon.org/petitions/elimination-of-the-unfair>. Over 83,000 Americans have already signed the petition and the related bill now has over 200 Congressional sponsors. □

RETIREE MEMBERS DISCUSS PSC ISRAEL-PALESTINE RESOLUTION

In a lively, respectful discussion on Wednesday, October 20, 57 retiree chapter members discussed and debated the resolution passed on June 10 by the PSC Delegate Assembly (DA), entitled "In Support of the Palestinian People." At the outset Bill Friedheim, chapter chairperson, and moderator Bonnie Nelson noted that this was a special meeting solely to discuss the controversial resolution, poll members about it, and report the results back to the DA.

Four PSC members addressed the resolution briefly at the outset:

- Jonathan Buchsbaum spoke in support of the June 10 resolution,
- Irwin Yellowitz advocated that the resolution be rescinded,
- David Kotelchuck urged that the resolution be amended or replaced, and
- Nancy Romer urged members of the chapter to accept the results of the resolution and move on to more pressing union matters.

The floor was then opened up for discussion, comments and criticism from chapter members for the next hour,

during which all chapter members who wished to speak were able to do so. Details on the discussion and speaker presentations will be published in the next issue of our newsletter.

Finally, the members were polled on the following four questions, with the results:



Do you agree with Jonathan Buchsbaum and support the June 10 DA Resolution in Support of the Palestinian People as it stands?

Agree	20%
Disagree	76%
Not sure	4%

Do you agree with Irwin Yellowitz that the DA resolution of June 10 on Israel/Palestine should be rescinded?

Agree	60%
Disagree	31%
Not sure	8%*

Do you agree with Dave Kotelchuck that the June 10 resolution should be amended or replaced?

Agree	60%
Disagree	36%
Not sure	4%

Do you agree with Nancy Romer that for the long-term good of the Union we should just accept the results of the vote on the Resolution and move on?

Agree	40%
Disagree	57%
Not sure	2%*

* Sum < 100% due to round-off error.



I knew that when I got my health insurance booklet from NYC Medicare Advantage Plus, I needed to be prepared for the level of duplicity that I was sure it must contain.

I was right and it didn't take long. The very first statement in the booklet was an outright lie. So was the second statement. Here they are:

"Overall plan highlights

The City of New York offers you this NYC Medicare Advantage Plus Plan

(PPO) that includes many health resources and benefits that Original Medicare does not offer, like:

- A \$0 copay for an Annual Wellness visit
- National Access Plus, which allows you to see any doctor or hospital who accepts Medicare"

Statement 1:

It takes little effort to find the truth on Medicare's website (<https://www.medicare.gov/coverage/early-wellness-visits>):

"Yearly "Wellness" visits

If you've had Medicare Part B (Medical Insurance) for longer than 12 months, you can get a yearly "Wellness" visit once every 12 months to develop or update a personalized prevention plan to help prevent disease and disability, based on your current health and risk factors. Your provider may also perform a cognitive impairment assessment.

Your costs in Original Medicare

You pay nothing for this visit if your doctor or other qualified health care provider accepts assignment."

Statement 2:

Saying that Original Medicare does *not* allow you to see any doctor or hospital who accepts Medicare is completely illogical to begin with, but proceeding to claim that MA Plus *does* just compounds the absurdity. The booklet refutes this claim itself on page 10, allowing that when "a provider that accepts Medicare tells a retiree they will not accept payment from the NYC Medicare Advantage Plus Plan," the plan will try to work with the provider.

The booklet goes on to make numerous misleading statements, like “You’re not tied to a provider network” (in many respects you are), and the abbreviated list of services requiring prior authorization (without acknowledging that Original Medicare does not require prior authorization for all but one of them). The penultimate page says that Medicare gave the plan 4 out of 5 Stars for 2021—but the plan won’t exist until 2022. What appears on this page is actually information about something called “Empire BlueCross BlueShield Retiree Solutions,” which has been stuck into the booklet to make you think Medicare has rated NYC Medicare Advantage Plus. It has not.

It’s ironic – but I should have been prepared for that, too – that retirees who blew the whistle on the secret plan to privatize our health insurance were accused of spreading “misinformation” among their fellows, given the number and seriousness of the falsehoods contained in the document presented to all of us.

Bob Nelson
Graduate Center

To the Editor:

A CUNY retiree, I am appalled by the recent actions our union has taken regarding Israel.

It never fails to astound me that organizations that purport to uphold liberal values, including the rights of women, those who identify as LBGT, and dissenters, repeatedly condemn the only democracy in the Middle East,

while supporting those who make a mockery of the values they supposedly hold dear: civil rights, equal rights, and due process under law. They support those who deliberately store their arms in areas populated by women and children and then blame Israel, whose citizens are repeatedly attacked by the missiles of terrorists, for killing babies. They find it horrifying that Israel has the



audacity to protect and defend its own citizens. Do these so-called “liberals” really believe that a tiny country besieged by terrorists who have repeatedly refused to make peace because what they really want is *all* of Israel, not just a part of it, should not retaliate? Would they ever dream of demanding such a sacrifice from any other country or even condemning the sickening actions of other countries like China that persecute their peaceful minorities without any provocation? The answer is a resounding no. Only Israel is singled out for condemnation, so let’s not pretend that the “moral outrage” expressed by our union is anything but anti-Semitism. Its anti-Israel resolution is a travesty of all the values it supposedly holds dear and would be comical if the stakes were not so high.

Many thanks,
Joan Zlotnick
Professor Emeritus, Brooklyn College

TURNING THE PAGE is a publication of the Retirees chapter of PSC-CUNY, Local 2334 of NYSUT and the AFT. We welcome contributions from our several thousand members: articles of special interest to retirees, short essays on your activities during this period of politics and plague, and your comments on recent publications of interest. Our newsletter collective is made up of Michael Frank, Joan Greenbaum and Dave Kotelchuck. Please write to us at retirees@pscmail.org, with 'Newsletter' in the subject line. Letters to the editors, new books and articles and issues of interest will return again next month (as you send them to us, please). □

LIFE DURING WARTIME

Josh Brown, the retired director of the American Social History Project at the CUNY Graduate Center, has produced a series of weekly political illustrations, beginning in 2003 with the war in Iraq, called Life During Wartime. We normally print his latest drawing, but since his most recent illustrations are animated GIFS, we cannot reproduce them for a newsletter which most of our members read as hard copy. But, you can view them by going to the entire collection, 2003- 2019, which is online at: www.joshbrownnyc.com/ldw.htm.
