

S.S.R.A. NEWSLETTER

Volume XVI, Issue 4

May—June 2017

First, along with the rest of the board of the Smithtown Schools Retirees' Association (SSRA) I would like to congratulate all the retirees from 2017. Our best wishes go to all of you. May you have a healthy, and lengthy retirement. More details on our organization can be found on page 8.



The Common Core as we know it is done in New York State. But is it really done? Now we have the Next Generation Learning Standards. The No Child Left Behind, in existence since 2002, has been replaced by the Every Student Succeeds Act. Is this all a smoke screen or are real changes to take place both in testing and as a tool in teacher evaluation? As of now, there is a moratorium on the use of test scores being used in evaluations. But this is scheduled to end in 2019-20.

The Common Core was often associated with the volume of testing in grades 3-8, resulting in volumes of students opting out of these tests all over the nation. Long Island parents in particular have been most vocal in protesting these tests with more than 50% of eligible students opting out.

To counteract this trend, MaryEllen Elia, New York's State Education Commissioner, recently held the first of 13 public meetings to discuss the Every Student Succeeds Act. Her goal is to emphasize that these new tests are more for measuring a students improvement and not on whether they can attain a certain level of proficiency. Federal law requires a 95% test participation. But the large numbers of students opting out of these tests often makes these scores invalid. The issue of teacher evaluation associated with test results has yet to be decid-

ed.

In prior issues of our Newsletter, you have read about a vote on having a Constitutional Convention to amend or change the NY State Constitution which will be on this November's ballot.

Should it be approved a Convention will be called for in 2018. Any recommended changes will then have to be approved by the voters in a subsequent election. By law, whether a Convention should be held appears on New York's ballots every 20 years.

The ramifications of a Convention can have dire consequences for not only teachers but for all state, county or government workers or retirees. At the whim of the delegates, pensions can be altered, collective bargaining can be eliminated, and even the right to a free public education can be affected. In NY, the "forever wild" environmental safeguards for regions like the Catskills and the Adirondacks can take a hit.

The delegates by the way are mostly state legislators, state senators, judges and lobbyists. The issue of this being a conflict of interest has been addressed before but never changed. The salary for delegates is equal to the per diem salary of members of our state legislature. Did someone say this sounds like "double dipping"? It is, and it is allowable unless changed by these same delegates. More details on this whole issue can be found on page 5.

Have a great summer and stay healthy!

Carl Haymes
Editor

Smithtown Schools Retirees' Association

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The Smithtown Schools Retirees' Association is affiliated with the Smithtown Teachers' Association, The New York State United Teachers and the American Federation of Teachers

Monthly meetings are held on the second Monday of each month at 9:30 AM
at the STA office

All members are invited to attend. We encourage your input.



Congratulations 2017 Retirees

(teachers and administrators)

Michael Chicvak	Annette Merkel
Michael Chlystun	Diana Riccoboni
Nancy Friedlander	Jeannine Rosengrant
Jeanne Hall	Frank Rotella
Patricia Hattenback	Eileen Rowe
Deborah Margino	Joyce Tyree
Ralph Maritato	Arlene Wild

Our Heartfelt Condolences to:

Joanne & Frank Perrino on the loss of their grandson, Alec Ross in March.

The family of Virginia Kelly, former district Spec. Ed. Teacher who passed away in March.

The family of Clara Dreiss, retired Social Studies teacher at HS East, who passed away in April.

The family of Joseph Hagn, former Guidance Counselor at HS East who passed away in May.

June Ferri and family on the loss of their son Douglas in May.



News of Members



As retirees, we have the opportunities to undertake many diverse and interesting activities and trips. Why not share them with us? We welcome any stories, poems, volunteer work, adventures or whatever you would like to tell your former colleagues.

Susan Seiler - Sue and Rob became grandparents for the first time on March 13th. They welcomed Kira Harper Matzkin into the world. Their daughter Erica and husband Aaron are the proud parents. On April 28th, Sue and Rob, along with their son Evan and his wife Erica, welcomed Theodore Lochlan Nonni Seiler into the family. They are thrilled to be part of the this amazing “grandparent club.” Everyone is well and thriving.

Carmelina Trifiletti - This past April, my hubby Sal and I enjoyed a wonderful cruise to the Panama Canal. We sailed out of Fort Lauderdale, Florida to Aruba, Cartagena, Colombia, the Panama Canal of course, Limon, Costa Rica, and the Grand Cayman Islands. Besides gaining 10 pounds in 10 days, (UGH), it was wonderful trip with a very interesting itinerary! I would recommend it highly and now Sal and I can scratch off the Panama Canal from our bucket list!

Philippa Green - Music has been keeping Philippa busy in her retirement. She is a Horn Instructor at Chaminade BHS two days a week. Then she performs with the NORTHWINDS Symphonic Band and also serves as an All-State judge with the New York State School Music Association

John Howe - My wife and I returned from two really great trips. In March, we joined a Road Scholar trip to Hawaii (Program #21974-030917), where Linda has wanted to go since we first met in 1971.

We first flew to Honolulu on our own and spent two days in Waikiki and spent an entire day at Pearl Harbor which was a very moving experience. We then flew to the big island where we joined up with the Road

Scholar participants. We had a Volcanologist take us to Kilauea Caldera where we got to see an erupting volcano, and the steam pouring out of the steam vents. Next we walked through a lava tube that you could drive a tractor trailer through it was so big! Then it was on to the Kaloko Cloud Forest, a privately owned cloud forest preserve on the slopes of Hualalai Volcano. Our group was unbelievably small....just eight of us!



The next leg of our Hawaiian adventure had us join the Safari Explorer for an Un-Cruise adventure. It was a small craft that

only had room for thirty six passengers. Again luck prevailed as the eight Road Scholar people joined up with eighteen other passengers for a total of only twenty-six passengers, ten below capacity. The meals on the ship were astounding! We had many snorkeling opportunities during the week we were aboard, including a night snorkeling adventure where the local divers brought lights to the sea floor in a circle known as the “campfire.” The purpose was to attract plankton which the Manta Rays come to feed on.



(cont. on p.4)



We got to kayak several times, and enjoyed an afternoon paddle on an eight person outrigger canoe where we had spinner dolphins following our boat and jumping out of the water twenty feet from us. It was spectacular! There were whales everywhere we went. We visited several of the islands as well, Maui, Molokai, Lanai, Hawaii, etc. We experienced a private Paina, which we know better as a luau. We got a good understanding of Hawaiian traditions and customs, and I was even successful at blowing a conch shell. My wife raved about the food that was served to us, claiming it was the best food she has ever eaten. That was true, until our trip in early May...

In May we took our first ever trip to Italy. We went with a couple we have been friends with since our first Caribbean cruise almost thirty-five years ago. They live in Ohio, and she contacted us to tell us about this B & B that was written up in the Cleveland newspapers. It was about Carmelo, a man who was born in Italy, came to America and opened up a restaurant in Cleveland. There he stayed for twenty years. He became a master chef. When his daughter was born they decided to move back to Italy to open up a B & B. What a good move for us! We contacted him, and hired him to also be our guide.



Since he was a gourmet cook, we woke up to unbelievable breakfasts and returned home to scrumptious dinners.. He took us in his Mercedes van to many of the points of interest in Italy. His B&B is centrally located in Umbria in the town of Passignano. From there we spent an entire day in Rome, two hours to the south. We did all the touristy things like throw a coin in the Trevi Fountain, and we had a Rocky-esque sprint up the Spanish Steps with Carmelo. Another day we spent in Florence, two hours to the north. We also traveled north to Pisa, where we climbed the tower for a magnificent view. During all of our trips, he shared with us his love and fascination with history. Even John Pettit would be blown away by how much

knowledge this man Carmelo was able to share in a very interesting light. He took us to several wineries and learned all about the wine making process. We even got to operate the machinery that presses the gold foil on the tops of Champagne bottles!

We visited many of the smaller cities all around Italy; Siena, Cortona, Assisi, Orvieto, Civita, San Gimignano, Lucca,, Montalcino, Pienza to name a few. One of the perks in using Carmelo is that he seems to know people everywhere. In Deruta, famous for its pottery making, he took us to Carlo Favaroni's factory. There we watched a pottery maker as he crafted a vase, walked through the area where they dried the pottery and fired it in the kiln. Then Mr. Favaroni showed us the glazing process, and finally upstairs where a group of artists performed the painstaking task of painting all the detail on the pottery.



If you are interested in booking Carmelo, you can check out the B&B on his website, which is at: www.villatrasimeno.eu, or you can e-mail him at carmelo@villatrasimeno.com. If you open your e-mail to him by saying "Montepulchiano!", he will know I sent you as this was a running joke the ten days we were with him. I highly recommend this trip, and he will custom tailor your visit to anything you want to do. He told us he has even done overnight trips up to Venice. If you have any questions about either trip, you can e-mail me at jhowe@learnhowe.com.

Larry Hohler - Hope Children's Home is moving into the 21st century! Fifteen of the 27 laptops that were reconfigured by students at Eastern Suffolk B OCES have been installed in a room off the dining hall. With the installation of a modem, Sunday nights have been set aside for our children to email their mentors in the US. In June, Shravan Joshi and his mother Nisha will be visiting. Shravan came with us to Kenya when he was a student at Shoreham Wading River High School. Now an engineering student at Colorado State and a mentor of one of our children, he will be exploring the possibility of installing a solar array on the dormitory roof. Because the Home is located less than 10 miles from the equator, the benefits of solar power will be significant. Nisha Joshi, a pharmacist and yoga instructor, will be visiting our children's schools to spread the word about the benefits of yoga. We are hoping that the Joshis will have room to take along some of the donated school supplies and soccer uniforms that we couldn't take with us when we visited in September.

**CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION:
What's at stake?**

Why in five

1. The environment - New York State's Constitution has the nation's strongest protection for forever wild areas like the Adirondacks and the Catskills. Greedy developers could push to undo these safeguards.
2. Public education - The state constitution guarantees our students the right to a free public education.
3. The social safety net - The state constitution ensures the state provides for citizens in need.
4. Our voting right - the constitution guarantees valuable protections.
5. Don't risk losing these vital safeguards.

Vote NO!

**CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION:
A politicians' convention**

Why in five

1. During the last convention four out of five delegates were career politicians and Albany insiders.
2. And every politician who ran for a delegate seat that year, won a delegate seat.
3. And who ran the show? All of the convention leaders were sitting legislators.
4. Most troubling? Thanks to Citizens United, corporate special interests can spend unlimited money getting their cronies elected.
5. Do you trust Albany insiders, to do what's right? Don't risk it.

Vote NO!

(more on p. 12)

**CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION:
A waste of tax dollars**

Why in five

1. Experts estimate a constitutional convention will cost hundreds of millions in taxpayer dollars.
2. Lawmakers can collect salaries and pension credits as elected officials and as delegates simultaneously.
3. The last time a constitutional convention took place, it cost taxpayers millions and accomplished nothing.
4. Constitutional conventions don't have mandatory end dates - Delegates keep meeting and taxpayers keep paying.
5. Should taxpayers fund a party for Albany insiders? No!

Vote NO!

OFF THE CUFF

by John Pettit

By now, every member should have received the SSRA 2017 – 2019 Membership Directory – we are quite proud of this edition because of the hurdles we had to cross to get it into your hands. Only recently did we come to realize the full extent of the huge help given by Mary Mills in both keeping our records up-to-date as well as the production guidance she provided. With Mary's retirement, last year, we were "flying solo" with the new edition and, as frequently happens when the need is greatest, someone stepped up to offer assistance: Patty Stoddard (2015 retiree), with a "can-do" attitude, proved to be super knowledgeable in computer and production techniques. The SSRA is most grateful for all her hard work in making the Directory possible.

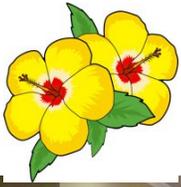
IMPORTANT: Since the new Directory includes "Changes & Additions" of members' info submitted in March April and early May, there is no need for us to send it out separately. The only "Changes" included in this Newsletter are those which were received too late for inclusion in the new Directory.

Membership/Dues: Thanks to a late surge in membership renewals, enrollment for 2017 is close to that of the previous year -- the SSRA is stronger because of the sustained membership numbers.

Spring Luncheon: The Luncheon at Ciro's of Hauppauge was terrific – the food was excellent and the crowd was great fun. We are currently open to any and all suggestions for making our "gatherings" more appealing to an even wider segment of the membership – as costs continue to rise and our tastes change, it doesn't have to remain the twice-a-year traditional luncheon. Any ideas would be welcomed.

Internet: I certainly hope that everyone has had success and is enjoying the ease of use of the "MySSRA.com" website, as described in the previous issue.

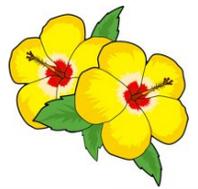
A Thought: When half the people get the idea that they do not have to work because the other half is going to take care of them, and when the other half gets the idea that it does no good to work because somebody else is going to get what they work for, that is the beginning of the end for any nation. - Adrian Rogers

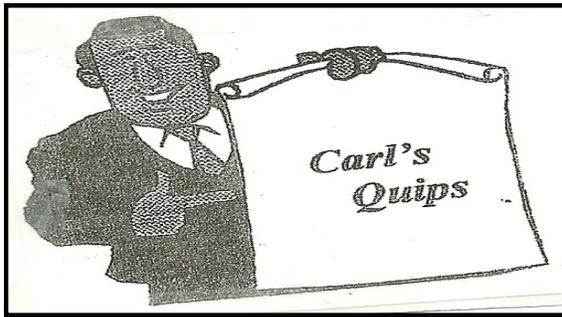


2017 SSRA Spring Lunch-



at *Ciro's Italian Restaurant*





Language is not properly the servant of thought but not infrequently becomes the master.

Clulow

Answers from students' papers collected over many years. Laugh or cry, but enjoy them. If you know of any and would like to share them, please send them to the Newsletter.

In Great Expectations, Dickens creates sympathy for Pip by giving him a girl's name.

Calories are used to measure how much people complain about their weight.

An Oligarchy is a society where ugly people rule the country.

Ancient sultans had wives but also porcupines.

Q. List 3 ways plants interact with each other.

A. They don't. They're plants. Is this a trick question?

In biblical times, the Egyptian soldiers were drowned in the desert.

This section is intentionally left blank.

Changes in members' personal information will be sent separately by email.

SSRA is the Voice of Retirees

The Smithtown Schools Retirees' Association (SSRA) is an organization formed about 25 years ago to assist all Smithtown retirees teachers, administrators, secretaries and all other employees of the district make an easy adjustment to life as a retiree. We try to keep you apprised of legislation affecting retirees, distribute a Newsletter four times a year, send out pertinent emails, and we hold a luncheon twice a year. We have a website which you are welcome to visit. Just go to myssra.com. We also publish a Members' Directory every two years.

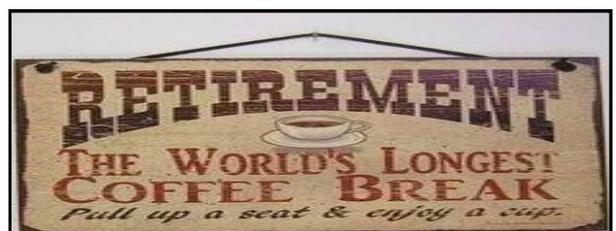
Our latest one was just mailed out to our members last month.



As a new retiree, you will be a complimentary member until the end of this year. We operate on a calendar year and not a school year. The dues will then be \$15 a year. By law, if you receive any of NYSUT's benefits other than a pension you must belong to your local retiree association. Board meetings are held at the STA office on the second Monday of the month as long as the schools are in session. Meetings begin at 9:30AM and all are welcome to attend.

Please be sure we have your email address and as with the Faculty Focus, this Newsletter can be accessed online For those who prefer a paper copy, at the present time we can accommodate you.

Congratulations once again and enjoy your retirement.



When Does "Old Age" Begin?

By
Joseph Gilkey, Ed.D.

Starting from the early days of our marriage, Heather and I have lived in some form of senior's community. First there was Fairfield at St. James, then retirement to Orlando and into the loosely organized senior's community of Williamsburg. Finally, 11 years ago we moved into a Continuous Care Community (Oak Hammock) affiliated with the university of Florida in Gainesville, Florida. This much history with seniors and senior living hopefully gives us some perspective that may be useful to other seniors as they too travel this path of life. I'd like to share some of my thoughts from along the path.

Aging - a phenomenon we will all experience, if we are lucky, fortunate, and have inherited reasonable genes - but when does "old age" begin? Was I in "old age" when I retired - that might typically be the demarcation point separating middle age from old age! But that was back when chronological age was used as the measuring stick. As teachers we have that rare opportunity to retire while in our upper 50's and lower 60's. Is that "old age"? I haven't found it to be true. Retirement took us away from New York and transported us to the sunny skies of Orlando. We became fully engaged - first in building a new house. Can you imagine "old aged" people committing to and building a new house? Then there were the volunteer jobs. I read the newspapers for the blind on Orlando's PBS TV station WMFE. We discovered Give Kids The World and all the skills I learned during my working years were most helpful as I built their "Memories" program. More than that we were working with kids again and developing new social contacts with other volunteers. GKTW fills around 1000 volunteer slots on a daily basis. Most are retirees and I could not imagine indicating they are "old aged". The church also became a place of extended activity. Both Heather and I, as we had done at GKTW, assumed leadership roles. That brought new and interesting people into our lives - all of whom would be considered "old aged" by the measuring stick that is the theme of this paragraph. One late afternoon after a church meeting one of the couples asked Heather and I what we were doing for dinner and asked us to join them at their house a short distance from the church. Once in the car they directed me to the general aviation airport in Orlando. They had a plane and it had been brought out, gassed and ready to fly. We got in the plane and flew to Lakeland, had dinner and flew back to Orlando. If you are in "old age", do you do these kinds of spur of the moment and exciting things? No, and for more than a decade Heather and I lived the halcyon days of activity, engagement, still building, and learning in Orlando. For us, retirement in this first decade after our professional days did not mean we were now "old aged".

So perhaps retirement is not the beginning of "old age". Maybe "old age" begins when you hit the chronological age of 70? It was about that time that Heather and I decided to make a big leap. We would give up owning a house and trade that asset for a totally different lifestyle. We moved into Oak Hammock at the University of Florida in Gainesville, Florida. Oak Hammock is a continuous care retirement community - (CCRC) which includes, under one roof, or in houses - independent living, assisted living, skilled nursing, and memory support. We moved into an independent living apartment and the activity level has never ceased. We have 2 semesters and a summer session of courses mostly taught by UF professors in our Institute for Learning in Retirement. Several mini-medical school lectures by professors from the medical and dental school faculty. Once again we both jumped into involvement with activities and the governance of this marvelous place. There are committees to be manned, resident council operations to be involved with, time in the fitness center, athletic events, performing arts evenings, and the list goes on. The activities we don't have to engage in are, housekeeping, meal preparation, or transportation to events. Now the average chronological age of our residents is the mid-80's and participation in one or more of the activities mentioned is very nearly 100%. Do people who are old aged engage in such a complete change of lifestyle? Would the old aged really want to participate in all this activity? I'm not sure old age begins in this decade.

(cont. on p. 10)

(Old Age - Cont. from p. 9)

Between the previous decade and the one before it we have sailed most of the seas of the world, travelled as far north as the Klondike, as far south as Cape Horn - east to St. Petersburg, Singapore and Borneo. We've lounged on the beaches of the French Riviera and have run our feet through the sands of Trunk Bay in the U.S. Virgin Islands. We've seen the national parks in the west and the many nooks and crannies of non-Disney Florida. I feel pretty sure with all this experience and engagement that chronological age is not a designator of "old age."

So here I am without a clear criteria to define "old age." I may be getting close though as I am in my mid 80's. I have had three hospitalizations over the past year. I've had to cancel some trips and I am drawing back from committee assignments, but I know there will be other trips and other assignments so that I will remain engaged. "Old age" is not a condition brought on by advancing years; it is a state of mind. The exception might be if the person is physically impaired but even then engagement is paramount. Oak Hammock has provided Heather and me with that engagement. A community like this becomes your family. They cheer for you, assist you, socialize with you, and engage with you when you when you most need them. I think I will just give up on finding life's demarcation point when one moves from middle age to "old age." It is amorphous and highly dependent on the person and their engagement with people and the activities of life. Stay engaged and enjoy retirement.



High Schools Hold Awards Night

On June 1st, Smithtown held their 2017 Awards Night honoring their seniors with deserving awards. Our Guidance Departments select a senior from each HS for a \$500 scholarship award from our SSRA. The award for each student is based on a combination of community service, good character and academics.

The recipients of this year's SSRA awards were Victoria Lombardi from HS East and Gianna Bove from HS West,

Our best wishes to these two Seniors!

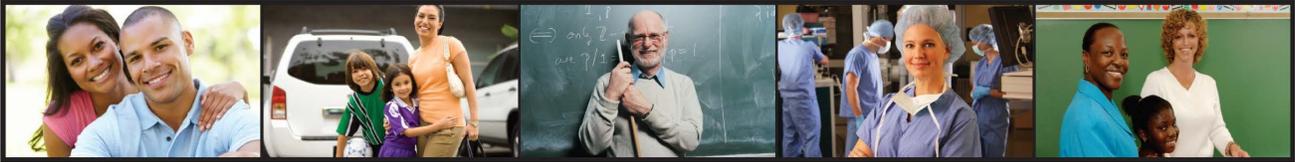
2017 SSEA

Retirees

- | | |
|--------------------|--------------------|
| Jose Alvarez | Michael Martucci |
| Carmela Amatuccio | Patricia Mattis |
| Maureen Badillo | Arleen McGrath |
| Thomas Clifford | Wayne McKee |
| Susan Cooley | Carol Meyer |
| Dawn Dost | Cathy Muchin |
| Peter Fucito | Maria Spera |
| Rose Ann Fudjinski | Patricia Tripptree |
| Katherine Giordano | Debra Ventre |
| Susan Goldstein | Barbara Walker |
| Geraldine Jansen | |

VOTE -COPE Contributions Needed !

Want to make a VOTE-COPE contribution? Help fend off anti-union attacks. Send your check made out to Vote-Cope to the SSRA at 26 New York Ave., Smithtown, NY 11787.



NYSUT Member Benefits offers savings, advocacy

Your union is steadfast in its fight for better contracts, safer working conditions, fair pay, advocacy and upholding the labor rights of the dedicated women and men proudly working in the education and health care industries on a daily basis.

But your NYSUT membership does so much more! It also provides you the opportunity to enjoy the benefits of the more than 40 endorsed programs & services offered by NYSUT Member Benefits. Look to Member Benefits for crucial insurance programs such as auto, homeowners, life, disability, or long-term care insurance along with a variety of travel, entertainment & shopping options.

And participation in Member Benefits-endorsed programs & services gives you the added protection of knowing you have a trusted advocate on your side. Each of our endorsed offerings are regularly reviewed and monitored to ensure member satisfaction. Member Benefits is here to help if you should ever have any issues or concerns with any of these programs.

The following is just a sampling of the endorsed programs & services available to NYSUT members & their families:

- Homeowners Insurance
- Auto Insurance
- Legal Service Plan
- Financial Counseling Program
- Life Insurance
- Vision Plan
- Abenity Discounts
- Office Depot/OfficeMax
- Car & Truck Rentals
- Wyndham Hotels
- TripBeat by Endless Vacation
- Premier World Discovery



To learn more about Member Benefits-endorsed programs & services, visit ***memberbenefits.nysut.org*** or call **800-626-8101**.



For information about contractual endorsement arrangements with providers of endorsed programs, please contact NYSUT Member Benefits. Agency fee payers to NYSUT are eligible to participate in NYSUT Member Benefits-endorsed programs.

**CONSTITUTIONAL
CONVENTION
It's just not necessary**

Why in five

1. A process already exists to amend the state constitution and it doesn't cost a thing.
2. For example, the state legislature passed an amendment in 2013, expanding casino gambling. The same process could be used for new amendments.
3. Opening the state constitution is like opening Pandora's Box. You can't predict what changes delegates will make.
4. The last time a convention took place it was a complete failure; voters rejected every proposed constitutional change.
5. Don't add to Albany waste.

Vote NO!

**S.S.R.A.
c/o STA
26 New York Avenue
Smithtown, NY 11787**

**CONSTITUTIONAL
CONVENTION
Labor rights at risk**

Why in five

1. At risk: the right to unionize and bargain collectively. Your union's strength could be jeopardized.
2. At risk: Workers' compensation. Safeguard your rights if you are injured on the job.
3. At risk: Public pension protections. The constitution guarantees your pension will be there.
4. Other states have made drastic pension changes with disastrous results for active members and retirees. Don't let it happen here!
5. Don't risk your rights/your future.

Vote NO!