

December  
2017  
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### OSARC

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# OSARC newsletter



For the tenth straight year, OSARC's December meeting will feature a "feast" with extra-special, delicious 'goodies,' along with OSARC's own home-grown talent performing for us all. You'll also have the opportunity to join your brothers and sisters in singing songs of the season. Over the past few years, we've even had professional guest musicians, thanks to the New York Folk Music Society, in which OSARCer Eileen Pentel plays a major role.

It is safe to say, if you don't come and you don't share, why you'll never know what you're missing. In the photo above from last year's meeting, OSARCers Pentel and Nilsa Rios were joined by guest Heather Wood in leading OSARCers in a variety of holiday songs.

Over the past few years, we have been treated to wonderful performances of poetry, literature, drama, and song. If you have a special talent you wish to contribute, give Pentel a call at 718-672-6399 and let her know what you can contribute. If you get her voicemail, leave a message and let her know it's about OSARC's holiday party.

If you play an instrument, sing, perform stand-up comedy, recite poetry, act or do mime, we need you. Step up to the mic. You'll have a good time and your brothers and sisters will be grateful.

### YOUR OSARC DUES FOR 2018 ARE DUE IN JANUARY

An early warning that next month's *Newsletter* will be accompanied by your annual membership renewal notice. When you receive the January *Newsletter*, we ask that you promptly mail a check or money order payable to "OSARC," along with the green membership form, back to the union in the envelope provided. A team of agile OSARC volunteers, under the supervision of OSARC Treasurer Jean Anmuth, will be working to process your dues. It makes life a whole lot easier for them if you pay promptly. Meantime, best wishes for a happy and healthy new year to you and yours!

Next Organization of Staff Analysts' Retirees Club Event  
Wednesday • December 13, 2017 • 12:30pm - 2:30pm

### OSARC's Holiday Extravaganza

Guest Performers: Talented OSARCers (including, hopefully, YOU) will share music, song, and other artistic expression. Food will be much more festive than usual.

OSA Union Office • 220 East 23<sup>rd</sup> Street • 7th Floor

## OSARC Officers 2017-2018

Chairs.....Sybil Allen, Edmond Husbands  
 Vice-Chairs.....Serena Freeman, Alice Moise  
 Treasurer.....Jean Anmuth  
 Secretary.....Theodore White  
 COMRO Representatives.....Mark Lewis, Theodore White, Jay Warshofsky



Newsletter Editor/Writer/Photos.....Rob Spencer  
 Reporter/Writer: Theodore White Artwork: Theodore White

## We'll Be Seeing You In All The Old Familiar Places

Fifty-six (56) OSARC members and friends attended OSARC's November meeting:

Sybil Allen, Gilberte Ambroise, Jean Anmuth, Iris Bailey, Renee Bash, Maxine Batie, Andrea Behrens, Judy Berg, Vidyadhar Bhide, Orphia Crump, Joan Doheny, Delois Evans, Sandra Frazier, Serena Freeman, Joan Garippa, Kathy Gawronske, Patrick Giagnacova, Sherman Gould, Regina Gourdin, Al Gundersheimer, Diana Gundersheimer, Helen Hanigan-Kosuda, Elizabeth Henderson, Mary Hillman, Maria Holland, Ed Husbands, Tony Lee, Joel Leichter, Rosanne Levitt, Laura Limuli, Barbara Linder, Shirley Littman, Alice Moise, Olivia Parker, Eileen Pentel, Elizabeth Pi, Ed Platt, John Prior, Sylvia Pryce, Fred Ranzoni, Nilsa Rios, Nancy Russell, John Sellers, Carl Semper, Reasa Semper, Andrew Sessa, Velma Small, Tomi Smith, Sallie Stroman, Apinya Sukpanichnant, Hattie Thomas, Nadine Valenti, Nona Volk, Regina Weiss, Faye Wilson, Eddie Yood



Apinya Sukpanichnant

Maria Holland, who retired from the Department of Transportation in 2017, Apinya Sukpanichnant, who retired from the Department of Health in 2017, Helen Hanigan Kosuda, who retired from New York City Health+Hospitals in 2017 and Joan Garippa, who retired in 2017 from the Human Resources Administration, were all attending their first OSARC meeting. Welcome Maria, Apinya, Helen and Joan.

OSARC also welcomes Shirley Littman of the CWA Local 1180 Retirees and Eddie Yood, Co-Chair of the CWA 1180 Disability Committee, who joined us for the meeting.

We look forward to seeing *you* at our next event!

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## In Memoriam

With sadness, we report the deaths of two retirees. Joseph Pastore retired in 2000 as an Associate Staff Analyst at the Department of Homeless Services. Thomas McGann retired in 1995 as a Staff Analyst at the New York City Housing Authority. *The Newsletter* extends its condolences to their family and friends.

## Final Chance To Buy Union Holiday Party Tickets

This year's annual union holiday party is set for Thursday evening, December 14, 2017 at Grand Prospect Hall in Brooklyn from 5-9pm. If you want to come and haven't sent in your payment for tickets, call the union office at 212-686-1229 and speak with George Morgan. For retirees, the first two tickets are \$15 each. Any tickets beyond two are \$25 each. And remember – do not confuse the union's party with the OSARC holiday luncheon on Wednesday, December 13<sup>th</sup> from 12:30-2:30 which costs the usual \$2 luncheon fee only.



Tony Lee

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## Mary, Take a Bow

Treasurer Jean Anmuth singled out hospitality committee chair Mary Hillman for special recognition at the November OSARC meeting. Mary works closely with OSA staffer Carol Moten and other members of her committee to purchase and prepare the food for the monthly club meetings. The November meeting brought a special challenge because the union office was closed the day before the OSARC meeting for Election Day. Usually Mary orders the food the day before the meeting. Mary went that extra mile and came in on Monday and made sure lunch would be served on Wednesday! Bravo, Mary!



**OSARC ON STAGE:** OSARC member and actor Delois Evans (second from right) reports her performances in one of the leading roles in Gail Rivers' play *Southern Gals*, set in 1950's South Carolina, drew a substantial audience to JACK, a performance space in Brooklyn's Clinton Hill neighborhood. Delois says the November 18th and 19th shows were deeply satisfying for everyone involved.



## GOP Tax Plan An “Economic Dagger” Aimed At NYC

A fact sheet released at the end of November by City Comptroller Scott Stringer outlined 20 different ways in which the Republican Senate and House tax scam bills would harm New York City residents. Noting that the tax plans approved in the House and then under consideration in the Senate (which later passed their version of the bill) would grant massive tax breaks to corporations and the very wealthy, while cutting healthcare for millions and increasing taxes on many New York households, Stringer said “it doesn’t matter if you’re a Democrat or a Republican — if you’re a New Yorker, these bills go after you.”

The proposed changes in the tax system would especially harm New York tax payers. The plans would eliminate deductions for state and local income and sales taxes and limit property tax deductions, would boost taxes on low and middle-income families, and would cause a cut in affordable housing investment.

Stringer said “the GOP tax plans would make robber barons blush. Republicans might talk about fighting for the middle class, but they’re working to strip healthcare from millions and pickpocket working families to pay for giant breaks for big corporations.” Stringer slammed the bills as economically backward and morally wrong. He promised to continue analyzing the numbers and urged everyone to fight back against the bills.

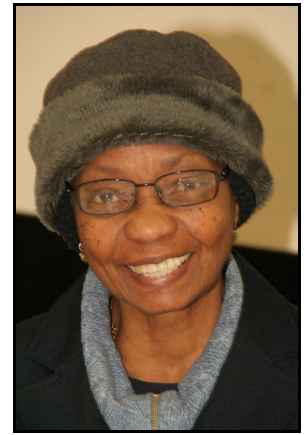
Stringer said the 20 ways the GOP tax plans hurt New Yorkers include:

1. The GOP plans produce a tax cut for big corporations and the very wealthy paid for through increased taxes on low- and moderate-income New Yorkers.
2. Presently, 1.3 million city residents deduct state and local taxes on their federal returns. Many of these NY City residents could see higher taxes with these deductions eliminated.
3. The House plan would result in almost 700,000 city residents paying more in taxes, half of them families and individuals with incomes below \$100,000.
4. The elimination of deductions for local property taxes will lower home values.
5. Unlike individuals, corporations could still deduct state and local taxes.
6. The top 1% of New York earners would see average tax cuts of over \$100,000 compared to an average one percent cut for families with incomes under \$100,000.
7. Corporate tax cuts would be permanent but cuts that benefit working people would phase out over time. In a decade, corporations will still be saving, but any benefit for workers will largely evaporate.



Sherman Gould

8. The plans favor some types of businesses over others: individuals with income from real estate and oil businesses would get significantly bigger tax breaks than doctors, lawyers, architects and other professionals.
9. The plans would tax university endowments, tax graduate fellowships, raise the cost of capital for non-profit hospitals, universities, social service and cultural institutions, and eliminate the deduction for student loans, a deduction worth \$309 million to 279,000 New Yorkers in 2015.
10. The House plan threatens affordable housing by eliminating private activity bonds and the associated Low Income Housing Tax Credits, which finance more than \$1 billion in affordable housing in New York City annually.
11. The Senate plan would repeal the Obamacare coverage individual mandate, resulting in 843,000 New Yorkers (and 13 million Americans overall) becoming uninsured and cutting Medicare by \$1.7 billion across the state.
12. Under the House plan, taxpayers with large medical expenses would be prohibited from deducting those expenses. In 2015, 125,000 NY City residents deducted \$1.2 billion in medical expenses from their taxes.
13. The plans would reduce charitable contributions, since many individuals would no longer deduct these from their income. In 2015, 26% of NY City filers took advantage of the deduction, averaging \$10,000 in charitable giving per filer. That’s over \$10 billion in support to food pantries, domestic violence victims, museums and cultural institutions, and more, said Stringer.
14. Under the House plan, when one of 92,000 City public school teachers buys supplies for their classroom, they will no longer be able to deduct that expense.
15. The House plan raises costs for state and local governments: it would tax certain earnings of public pension funds, and limit the refinancing of bonds, further raising costs for local taxpayers.
16. The House plan would trigger federal budget cuts that could result in elimination of over \$190 million per year in promised federal interest subsidies for City bonds issued under the 2009 stimulus act.
17. Under the House plan, starting in 2024, the estate tax will disappear completely, a tax affecting few Americans and only extremely wealthy



Gilberte Ambroise



Helen Hanigan-Kosuda

ones at that.

18. The Senate plan provides a tax break for owners of private jets.
19. The House plan eliminates the Work Opportunity Tax Credit, which encourages businesses to hire, among others, unemployed veterans and people with disabilities.
20. The tax plans would explode the federal deficit by \$1.5 trillion over a ten year period.

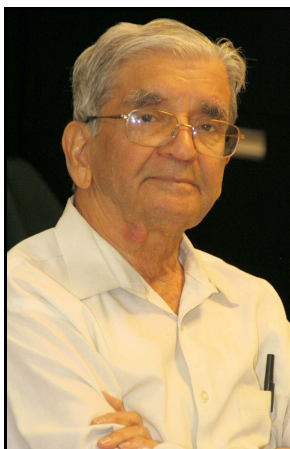


Nona Volk

impact of the bills on New York City residents, which described the bills as “an economic dagger aimed at high-tax, high-cost and generally Democratic-leaning areas — most notably New York City and its neighbors.”

Among the harms cited by the *Times*, “the plans could increase the regional tax burden, complicating companies’ efforts to attract skilled workers. It could make it harder for state and local governments to pay for upgrades to the transit system and other infrastructure. And it could force cuts in federal programs that help immigrants, the elderly and other low-income residents afford the region’s high cost of living.”

According to the *Times*, the elimination of the deductibility of state and local income and sales taxes, and the capping of property tax deductions at \$10,000 would seriously impact New Yorkers. They note that, in the NYC area, almost half of households itemize deductions and those households could see a major tax increase.



Vidyadhar Bhide

Not mentioned by Stringer is the fact that the GOP intends to use this explosion in the deficit to argue for severe cuts to America’s social safety net programs - Medicare, Medicaid and Social Security. It has been the GOP’s aim for decades to reverse the gains provided to ordinary Americans by the 1930’s New Deal and the 1960’s Great Society programs.

Stringer’s analysis was echoed in a December 5<sup>th</sup> *New York Times* article analyzing the

The *Times* noted that the bill’s “most damaging elements could take years to play out. The bill would add more than \$1 trillion to the deficit over a decade, according to Congress’s official scorekeeper. Under a 2010 law, the increased deficit would force automatic spending cuts to Medicare and other programs, many of which New York and other cities rely on to help their poorest residents.”

The bills will now go to a House/Senate conference committee since there are differences to be resolved before a revised bill can be put before both houses and on President Trump’s desk.

In New York State, five GOP House members voted against the House tax cut scam: Representatives King 202-225-7896, Stefanik 202-225-4611, Zeldin 202-225-3826, Donovan 202-225-3371 and Faso 202-225-5614 all voted NO. If you or someone you know live in their districts, call and thank them for that prior vote and urge them to vote against any bill that emerges from conference.

The other four GOP House members in New York voted for the tax scam: Collins - 202-225-5265, Tenney - 202-225-3665, Reed - 202-225-3161 and Katko - 202-225-3701. If you or someone you know are in their districts, call and tell them you are angry that they voted for the bill and hope that they will vote NO when a conference version is brought to the floor again.

It is not too late to have an impact on blocking the bills. It will take a few weeks for them to move through the conference process.

No matter where you live, if you have a Republican Senator or Representative, it is time to call them and tell them you oppose the bills. And, if you have relatives or friends with Republican Senators or Representatives, ask them to contact their representatives to tell them they oppose the legislation. Time is short.



**AWARD WINNING ACHIEVEMENT:** OSARC Secretary Ted White (center) was recognized by the Episcopal Church of Grace and Resurrection at its second annual dinner dance on November 17<sup>th</sup> for his contributions to the church community. He is seen here holding a certificate of recognition from New York State Senator Jose Peralta.



## COMRO Report

The Council of Municipal Retiree Organizations (COMRO) meets monthly, drawing representatives of the retiree sections of various municipal unions, including OSA, for a meeting on subjects of retiree interest. The following is a report on the November COMRO meeting, based on minutes provided by COMRO's Stu Eber.

COMRO celebrated the defeat of Proposition #1 on the November ballot. There will be no Constitutional Convention in New York State this time.

COMRO's guest speaker was Katie Robbins, MPH, Executive Director of the NY Metro Chapter of Physicians for a National Health Program ([www.pnhpnymetro.org](http://www.pnhpnymetro.org)), which advocates for a national Medicare for All healthcare system. She is also involved with the Campaign for New York Health ([www.nyhcampaign.org](http://www.nyhcampaign.org)) which is seeking to pass State Assemblymember Richard Gottfried's New York Health Act, which would create a single payer healthcare system in New York State.

Robbins distributed several handouts for the Campaign for New York Health, including "Endorsers of the New York Health Act," "Guaranteed Health Care for EVERY New York Resident," "HEALTH CARE for EVERYONE," and a postcard to mail to our state senators in support of the bill.

Gottfried has been sponsoring the New York Health Act (NYHA) since the 1990's. His current co-sponsor is State Senator Gustavo Rivera. Healthcare costs are increasingly one of voters' top concerns. NYHA would guarantee health care to all New York State residents.

It is an "improved Medicare for all" program that includes dental, vision and long-term care benefits, as well as the traditional doctor, hospital and drug coverage. It would be paid for through progressive taxes. It would eliminate the counties' share of Medicaid costs. Ninety-eight percent (98%) of people currently paying for their health benefits will receive the same or better benefits for less cost than their current private plan.

It would eliminate the profit motive and reduce the administrative burdens and costs currently experienced by providers, patients and insurance companies.

Private insurance companies and pharmaceutical companies are opposed to NYHA. Most unions support the bill.

Currently, one quarter of all private business owners are



Sybil Allen



Shirley Littman

uninsured. Private plans cost about \$22,000 per person a year.

The Assembly has passed the bill during three consecutive sessions. It fell one vote short in the State Senate this session. Jeff Klein and the other members of the Independent Democratic Caucus are the swing votes in the Senate. He has "promised" to make NYHA a priority in 2018. We need to urge each of our unions to make this a political priority.

During the Q&A period, several attendees spoke. It was suggested that PNHP should make an effort to have more than just one community board endorse NYHA. Gustavo Rivera should go to the two community boards his district covers. Katie will share a sample resolution.

Some unions support single payer in principle, but are concerned about what will happen to the union employees currently working on the administration of their welfare funds. These employees will need to be retrained in other aspects of health care and benefits management so they can transition if there is a reduction in union welfare funds' responsibilities. Existing plans would be protected during a phase-in period.

In addition, some unions do not support single payer or Medicare for All. However, the rank and file need to understand that the high cost of maintaining their current benefits under the present system will soon cause them to lose benefits as their welfare funds shrink. And NYHA would introduce economies of scale. Negotiating drug contracts for 20 million NYS residents rather than 300,000 NYC retirees will decrease the costs for all of us.

We need to talk to our unions' political action directors to see how we can move the Republican Senate to vote for NYHA based on human needs.

Some union drug benefit plans are beginning to suffer from the escalating costs of major drugs. While no union plan has gone bankrupt, nationwide more and more employee benefits are no longer being covered by their employers. The likelihood of NYC municipal employees being able to hold onto their benefits is becoming smaller and smaller. COMRO will focus on what we can do about Big Pharma in 2018.

It was observed that some city unions are being hard hit by drug costs. Members can have \$100,000 drug bills for prescriptions that have no cost controls. These new drugs will only cost more in the future and the unions and the City do not have the resources to keep up with the price increases.

It was suggested that PNHP reach out to the Long Island Federation of Labor and the Municipal Labor Committee for endorsements, as well as specific union presidents.

We need to persuade union members about the need for class solidarity in moving toward universal health coverage, rather than protecting specific union health plans.

It was concluded that before COMRO could vote on a resolution to support NYHA, COMRO representatives will have to go back to their respective unions for their endorsements.



Ed Yood



Serena Freeman

On other topics, it was reported that the next NYC Comptroller's Office Common Investment Meeting is set for December 20 at 9am at 1 Centre Street, 10th Floor, Room 1005. A video of the June meeting is available on the Comptroller's web site.

There was discussion of efforts to recruit additional unions to join COMRO next year and ways to increase the inclusiveness and gender and racial diversity of its membership.

Stu Eber and Neal Frumkin met with Ed Hysyk, Executive Vice President of the DC 37 Retirees Association, and Bob Croghan, Chair of OSA, to discuss options available to us in organizing against Big Pharma over their deliberate price gouging. Constant price hikes hurt both active and retired members. If we view our issues in a narrow way, we leave ourselves open to charges of being a special interest group. We need to build a coalition of labor, faith based groups and community organizations to address this criminal drug cost escalation. Adelle Rogers pointed out that the fact that the unions were not able to form a united front on drug costs became an issue with the introduction of Medicare Part D. The legislation specifically barred the government from negotiating with the pharmaceutical industry over price. COMRO needs a guest speaker early in 2018 to help focus the issue.

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## Social Safety Net Back in the Crosshairs

As the GOP's tax scam legislation was moving through both houses of Congress at the end of November, major players in the Republican Party were more than hinting that the next focus of their attack on ordinary Americans will be changes to Medicare, Medicaid, Social Security and federal welfare programs.



Regina Weiss

The *Washington Post* recently reported that House Speaker Paul D. Ryan (R-WI) "wants Republicans to focus in 2018 on reducing spending on government programs." And President Trump was quoted by the *Washington Examiner* as saying that "welfare reform" will "take place right after taxes, very soon, very shortly after taxes."

The irony of this is GOP advocacy of the need for deficit reduction at the same time they are pushing legislation on taxes that will add over a trillion dollars to the deficit over the next decade.

Senator Marco Rubio (R-FL) actually acknowledged that the Republican drive to cut taxes for the wealthy is the prelude to a larger attack on social safety net programs like Social Security and Medicare. Speaking to a group of lobbyists, he agreed that hiking the deficit through the tax bill is the GOP's first step toward undermining and dismantling the programs.

Asked by interviewers from the website *Politico* about the federal deficit, Rubio said "We have to do two things. We have to generate economic growth which generates revenue, while reducing spending. That will mean instituting structural changes to Social Security and Medicare for the future."

The Alliance for Retired Americans noted "Senator Rubio may have just told a secret that he was not supposed to spill. The GOP strategy of increasing the debt and then saying we need to cut Social Security and Medicare usually flies under the radar."

Rubio falsely claimed that "the driver of our debt is the structure of Social Security and Medicare for future beneficiaries." That certainly sounds like a plan to reduce benefits for those not currently on the programs.

In addition, Utah Senator and Senate Finance Committee Chair Orin Hatch, while whipping votes for the tax bill, said Congress needs to stop wasting Americans' money. "We're spending ourselves into bankruptcy," Hatch said. "Now, let's just be honest about it: We're in trouble. This country is in deep debt. You don't help the poor by not solving the problems of debt, and you don't help the poor by continually pushing more and more liberal programs through."

All of this is part of the general GOP rhetoric aimed at undermining the safety net, increasing inequality and transferring wealth upward to the truly rich and corporations.

During the presidential campaign, Trump claimed he was a different sort of Republican and vowed that there would be "no cuts" to Social Security, Medicare or Medicaid. Since taking office, however, he has not restated these promises and has reversed many campaign promises on the economy.

Ranking Senate Finance Committee member Ron Wyden (D-OR) said, "what's coming next is all too predictable: The deficit hawks will come flying back after this (tax) bill becomes law. Republicans are already saying 'entitlement reform' and 'welfare reform' are next up on the docket. But nobody should be fooled — that's just code for attacks on Medicaid, on Medicare, on Social Security, on anti-hunger programs."

To the extent that the tax bill was debated on the floor of the Senate (which was not very much), Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders asked Rubio and Senator Patrick J. Toomey (R-PA) to promise that the GOP would not move to cut Medicare and Social Security. Toomey said that there was "no secret plan" to do so, while Rubio said he opposed cuts to either program for current beneficiaries. Future beneficiaries



Andrea Behrens





Alice Moise

went unmentioned. "I am not going to support any cuts to people who are on the program and need those benefits. But I want this program to survive," Toomey said. Sanders responded: "He just told you he's going to cut Social Security."

Once again the GOP is creating a false sense of crisis where none presently exists by manufacturing one. Historically, efforts to undermine these programs have drawn support from right-wing Democrats as well as Republicans. Anyone remember the Obama

administration's "catfood commission" set up with Erskine Bowles and ex-Senator Alan Simpson at the helm?

With a likely heavily contested midterm election in 2018, it remains to be seen if the GOP will push these changes. Successfully scuttling the GOP's tax scam legislation would go a long way toward placing a roadblock in the way of these efforts.

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## Will Work For Food?

Help wanted! Convivial, joyous OSARC group seeks new members to stuff OSARC's monthly mailings on the first Wednesday and/or Thursday of each month (except July and August) late morning to middle-of-the-afternoon. Wednesdays are labeling and stamping. Thursday are stuffing and sealing. Lunch is provided. Entry level position. No experience required. On-the-job training provided. No applicant rejected. Contact Colleen Cox at (718)282-2586 or by email at [colcox182@aol.com](mailto:colcox182@aol.com)



Disaster Preparedness - It's In the Bag

Artwork by Theodore White

## OSARCers Learn How To Be Masters Of Disaster

by OSARC Secretary Theodore White

In opening our November meeting, OSARC Co-Chair Sybil Allen surprised and delighted club members by introducing eye exercises. She strongly recommends doing these simple exercises on a daily basis: looking as far left as possible, then as far to the right as possible, followed by looking upward, then downward. Repeat!

Co-Vice-Chair Alice Moise gave a warm welcome to attendees. She said the subject of the meeting, how seniors should prepare for disasters – natural and otherwise – was near and dear to her heart as she obtained a graduate degree in 2008 in emergency management.

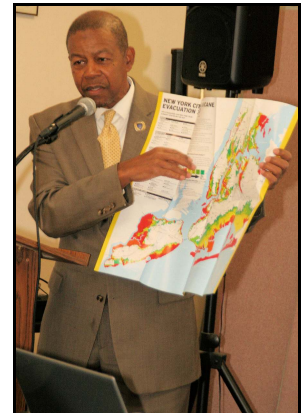
Moise noted that it is especially difficult for senior citizens to get around during times of emergency as some are quite limited physically. She also remarked there are many who face psychological ailments which limit their actions during an emergency.

Co-Chair Ed Husbands placed disaster preparedness in the context of climate change, noting a recent article in *National Geographic* magazine in which climate change in Antarctica and other locales was duly noted. He continued by saying if climate change keeps going at the present pace, we could witness sea levels rising by some thirteen feet. This would cause quite the dilemma to coastal areas, like New York City. He referenced the impact of Superstorm Sandy.

Guest speaker Ed Powell, Senior Outreach Coordinator for the NYC Office of Emergency Management opened his presentation by telling us he was a retiree himself, but that during intense conversations with close friends, he was drawn into doing work with OEM.

OEM responds to emergencies and coordinates first responders during any given emergency, such as the Department of Sanitation during major snow storms, and the Fire and Police Departments (when required) in order to achieve best practices.

Mr. Powell is responsible for disseminating crucial information to participating agencies, as well as to the public. He argued that OEM's oversight has produced improvements in the services rendered during and after overwhelming events and better coordinated response. He said snow removal has gotten better



OEM's Ed Powell



Eileen Pentel



Maria Holland & Laura Limuli review an OEM brochure.

and responses to hurricanes, blackouts, and fires are also managed better.

Powell mentioned a number of brochures and booklets put out by OEM which he provided to OSARCers attending the meeting.

He pointed to one which showed the way New Yorkers could be affected by a hurricane. Opening one of his booklets, Ed discussed the maps inside. They are color coded in an effort to show which coastal areas are most likely and which areas least likely to evacuate in the face of a hurricane. "Get to know your zone!" he strongly recommended.

He went on to talk about a booklet entitled "The Ready New York Emergency Plan." He soothed the audience when he said we are not alone. With family and/or friends we can make emergency plans. Number one, when an emergency happens we should automatically follow our plan. We must gather in advance the necessary supplies to support us during emergencies. Lastly, he said we must be aware of the resources that are available to us when disaster strikes. It is imperative to establish an emergency support network. This could be two or three or more family members or friends who live nearby; people you trust.

For instance, give a spare key to your home to someone you trust, so that in an emergency, first responders can easily get into your home to assist you.



Ed Husbands

Interestingly enough, Powell urged all to establish a network that included individuals outside of the city and even out of state. To hammer home the point, Powell asked if OSARC remembered when we had the last blackout in New York. Few of us really remembered, but he informed us it was on August 14, 2003. Powell got married that day. He and his bride planned to drive to Niagara Falls for their

honeymoon. They went to his apartment to get ready for the road trip and suddenly the lights went out. He became furious and charged downstairs to blame the building superintendent for bungling things once again. However, the superintendent remained blameless and told him to take a look out the window Aha! That is when Mr. Powell realized all of the lights were out in the city. A power failure. So, the Niagara Falls trip was canceled for the time being and they were stuck at home in the dark. He reported that they still had a good time! After the laughter subsided, Powell told us how hard it was to make local telephone calls during the blackout. With everyone trying to call within their borough or to another borough, the phone lines were simply jammed. Yet, it was easy to make a long distance call.

The advice to make sure you have a network out-of-state made sense: your local network can call Aunt Jenny in Tampa. Aunt Jenny can relay your message and report your condition when she is contacted by your network.

On that note, you can learn how those you were unable to call are doing, by calling Tampa.

The booklets that Powell shared have a page where you can write emergency contact information. You can indicate the medications you normally take, including the dosage; your blood type; and whether you have any allergies.

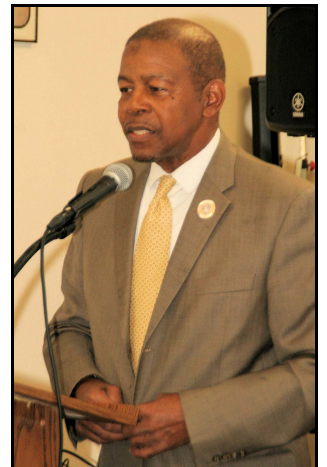
He said that people tend to panic or get nervous when faced with an emergency, so having vital information written down in advance can be very helpful.

Then it was "movie time!" A video was shown, emphasizing the value of proper preparation.

The video described an evacuation

due to an emergency caused by a gas leak. After a safe evacuation, plans made in advance for the video's main character and her network to meet in her apartment had to shift to "plan B." Since her building was deemed unsafe, their alternate plan was to meet at the local public library.

Powell launched into a quiz: if you live in a building seven stories high or less and you smell gas or see smoke, what should you do? The first answer from the audience was 'get out.' Others suggested calling 311 or 911, opening a window, or calling the gas company. 'Get out' was the correct answer and the responder won a flashlight as a prize. The next question was, 'what is a go bag?' OSARC came up with a short list of what should be in one very quickly – the go bag should contain crucial medications, copies of your identification, passport, insurance, deed, a flashlight, a few items of clothing. Some of us use flash/usb drives capable of storing tremendous amounts of information, including copies of documents. However, we were advised to primarily keep



NYC OEM's Ed Powell



hard copies of our information in the go bag (but not originals) because it may not be easy to get access to a computer. More ideas were added, such as taking a few snacks and water for yourself or others to enable consumption of prescription medication. A radio and batteries or a hand-cranked radio was recommended.

Carry lots of dollar bills in your go bag and remember your pets are welcome to evacuate with you to the shelter.

Powell asked us to consider extreme weather that ends up with deep snow or severe ice and the population is ordered to stay home to avoid slips and falls or getting electrocuted by downed power lines. OSARCers agreed that the best approach is to stock bottled water at home, canned foods, and to be sure to keep a manual can opener handy.

Powell asked how much water should one stock in case of an emergency? One member answered it should be one gallon per person per day. He won a flashlight.

To wrap up the session, Powell pointed to some of the other resources available in the booklets he was handing out, such as calling 311 to register for Notify NYC, which sends emergency information to your email or cell phone, generally before those same alerts are broadcast on television.

The question of having a 'safe room' was raised and answered by OSARC members and Powell: the basement of your private house, the room with no windows or the smallest windows in an apartment building, and some corridors.

A member raised the question of an accident or an attack that presented radioactive danger. Powell said the only option was evacuation if people somehow knew of the threat in advance.

Alice Moise recalled that during the terrorist attack on the World Trade Center in 2001, many people left their buildings but security denied them reentry due to the confusion and suspicions and the general lack of knowledge of the scope of the problem.

Ed Husbands recalled that while serving in the Army there was training that helped soldiers calculate the range of danger zones during a nuclear attack.

One OSARC member



Hattie Thomas

calmed the group, saying it was far more likely for someone to get hit by a car than to be a victim of a terror attack. She suggested we not make ourselves crazy with worry about negative possibilities.

Another OSARCer mentioned the carbon monoxide poisoning danger presented through the use of generators or grills indoors.

On that note, Powell concluded by thanking OSARC for having him speak and told everyone to study the printed materials he shared.



Sylvia Pryce

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## Five City Pension Funds in Sound Shape

According to an analysis done for COMRO by Warren Lewis with thanks to Stu Eber and Jay Warshofsky, for the Fiscal Year ending June 30, 2017 (FY'17), New York City's five public pension funds paid \$12.945 billion in benefits, an increase of \$0.399 billion over the amount paid in FY'16.

The value of the net assets of the five funds increased to \$163 billion for FY'17 from \$146.9 billion in FY'16 an increase of \$16 billion or 11 %. This compares to an increase in assets in FY'16 to \$146.9 billion from \$145.7 in FY'15 (+0.85 %.)

The revenues of all five pension funds increased in FY'17 to \$33.24 billion from \$15.17 billion for FY'16, due mainly to an increase in the net appreciation of the fair market valuation of investments.

While not fully funded, the City's pension systems remain in sound financial condition.

The NYC Employees Retirement System has 185,758 active members making contributions into the pension system and 144,526 retirees and survivors presently receiving pension benefits. The estimated average annual benefit allowance is \$32,070. Overall, all five pension systems (NYCERS, Fire, Police, Teachers and Board of Education) have a total of 370,528 members contributing, 309,154 retirees and survivors receiving benefits and an estimated average annual benefit allowance of \$41,903. The overall number skews higher because of the higher pension allowances for teachers, police officers and firefighters.

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Rosanne Levitt



Orphia Crump

## AARP Assesses Tax Bill's Impact on Seniors

The *Newsletter* is giving quite a lot of coverage to the GOP tax scam because of the need for your urgent action to try to derail the bills in conference. Elsewhere in this issue, we cover the harm the bills would do to New York residents, largely from the removal of a number of deductions currently utilized by many New York households.

Here, we explore the overall impact on older Americans as outlined by AARP. AARP points out that the tax legislation not only increases taxes on some taxpayers over 65, but it also would “trigger rules that, barring congressional action, would result in automatic cuts to federal programs.” AARP notes the non-partisan Congressional Budget Office has estimated those cuts would be \$136 billion in FY2018, with \$25 billion of them coming from Medicare.

Both the Senate and House bills double the standard deduction, eliminate personal exemptions, eliminate certain itemized deductions, and cut the maximum corporate tax rate from 35 percent to 20 percent.

In the Senate version, many of the supposed tax cuts affecting individuals expire after 2025 while corporate cuts live on indefinitely. While the Senate version keeps the extra standard deduction for seniors and the blind and the medical expense tax deduction, the House bill does away with them.

AARP had the Institute for Tax and Economic Policy (ITEP) analyze the Senate bill to estimate its impact on older Americans. The results showed potential negative long-term impact. Many taxpayers aged 65 and over get some tax relief under the bill, but others end up paying higher income taxes than they pay now – and the number facing increased taxes rises over time.

Overall, 20% of these older taxpayers, totaling 6.3 million taxpayers, would either see no change or experience a tax increase in 2019. About 1.2 million would get a tax hike and 5.1 million would see no change. About 29% of older taxpayers with income below \$65,150 (a limit that captures 60% of all taxpayers), would see no tax change or a hike.

Given the sunset of the modest middle class tax cuts provided, taxpayers 65 and over who would experience a tax hike would jump more than four times in eight years from 1.2 million in 2019 to 5.2 million in 2027. Another 5.6 million older Americans would see no tax change in 2027, for a total of 10.8 million taxpayers. By 2027, 36% of taxpayers 65 and over with incomes below \$65,150 would see no change or an increase in their taxes.

Finally, with the massive increase in the deficit the cuts will produce, seniors may receive reduced value from Medicare and other key programs.

## Happy Birthday to OSA Retirees Born in December

Raphael Agbune, Mary E. Akalski, Mahmoud Sami Ali, William Allen, Tiva Amaritnant, Michael Ambrosia, Elliot Ames, Thomas Andrews, Francisco Arcentales, Kwame Asante, Sharon Austin, Joyce P. Badawy, Judith Balos, Ruthena Barcus, Mary Bardy, Edith Joan Barrow, Richard Barth, Eileen Bartky, James A. Beavan, Yolanda Womack Beckett, Anne Beller, Carolyn Bennett, Raymond Benz, Richard N. Bernard, Edward Bianchi, Haripal Bisnath, Kevin Blanchard, Shirley Bonadie, Joseph Bonelli, Cheryl Boyce, Edward Bradley, Harry Bragg, Connie Bray, Joyce B. Bronstorph, Robert L. Brown, Denise Brown, Brian J. Burke, Michael Calabrese, Denise A. Campbell, Michelle A. Carlos, Ann Marie Caso, Gerard E. Castagna, Joseph Castagna, Lana Cherry, Ida Chin, Anthony Cirigliano, Nicolina Coccozziello, Irwin M. Cohen, Orphia E. Crump, Stanley Cutchins, Benjamin Dairo, Richard M. Dalrymple, Pratip K. Dasgupta, Christopher Davis, Anthony J. DeGennaro, Arsenia Delgado, Patrick Dennis, Immanuel Desai, Marcelino Diaz, Charles DiGiacomo, Munir Din, Ellen Diner, Ronald Dobson, Anna Donovan, John G. Duarte Jr., Vincent Dufour, Philip C. Eisman, Bruce Farbowitz, Joseph Faure, Jane Ferner, Charles Fitzpatrick, Kevin T. Flannery, John Francis, Seth Frankel, Marion E. Franklin, Marcus Freeman, Barry Gabriel, Adenago Galarza, Ted Gallagher, Cynthia F. Gilliam, Shirley O. Gilliam, Mary A. Giraldi, Tatyana Gitis, Edwina Glasco, Marianne Gluck, Neil Godden, Irwin Goldberg, Tatyana Golovitser, Renee Gonzalez, Mary C. Gorman, Arlene T. Gray, James Green Jr., Josefino D. Gumpeng, Noela Haddock, Edmund Hall, Helen Hanigan-Kosuda, Sharon Harris, Valencia Haughton, James Hazley, Harvey Hecht, Gwendolyn Henderson, Dorothy Henry, Arnold Herskovitz, Veronica Hill-Lewis, Francis X. Hillis, Rita Honekman, Thomas Hotz, David Hyde, Margarette Jabouin, Daniel J. Jacobson, Anna M. James, Elsie T. James, Colleen Jinks, William Jones, Elizabeth Jones, Peter Kanakaris, Philippa Karteron, Daniel Katz, George R. Keenan, Kevin Kelly, Marina Khasileva, Mavis P. King, Alfred Klein, Eric H. Klein, John Klumpp, Diane M. Koehler, Ronald Komer, Leon Komondorea, Henry L. Korobelnik, Edward S. Lakner, Saundra Lamb, George Lang, first name last name, Robert S. Lawrence, Ling Lee, Tony Lee, Thomas Leonard, Richard Leonard, Alex K. Lukose, Mary Lynch, Shafia Mamun, Richard Matarangelo, Carmen Matias, John R. Mauldin, Michael E. McCray, Maria L. McGhee, Thomas McNulty, Bruce Mednick, Neil Mendelsohn, Joseph Miller, Michael Minis, Maggie Moats, George Montalvo, Sadad Morcos, Liza Morcos, James M. Moss Jr., Patricianne Murnane, Virginia A. Murphy, T. Rasul Murray, Marilyn E. Ng-A-Qui, Edward A. Nicastro, Jon Norville, Joyce O'Connor, Daniel O'Leary, Cathyanne Obidienzo, Rockie Ojumu-Kayoes, Daniel Orlando, Gloria Page, Larry M. Pappert, Ronald A. Parente, Bertella Patterson, Robert Pellicci, Jack Pitilom, Anita Pittas, Phyllis Pittinsky, Janetta Praileau, Peter A. Prestia, Helene A. Price, Risa Puld, Harris M. Rachlin, Lawrence Racioppo, Ruth Reinecke, Harold Rhodes Jr, Dorothy Rick, Martin L. Ricketts, Shirley B. Ricks, Christine Robinson, Patricia Robinson, Frances Roker, Margarette Rousseau, Robert H. Ruger, Claire R. Samuel, Rekha D. Schoumaker, Maria Segarra, Abdus Shahid, Naresh Sharma, Gail Siegal, Susan Silvestro, Valeria Singletary, Thomas Smith, Elaine A. Smith, Kalman Soloway, Larry Stevens, Ekram Tadros, Gloria Tapper, Leonie Taylor, Agnes Thanjan, Debra A. Thomas, Michael C. Tomlinson, Rosemarie Torres, Bethzaida Vazquez, Sarah R. Vilar, Gregory Vilchitski, Michael J. Vincent, Karmelita L. Walker, Jeffrey F. White, Joe Williams, Darrell A. Williams, Bassanio Wong, Judith Woods, Simeon D. Wright, Anita B. Yurman-King, Margie D. Zinzi





# OSARC MEMBERS FOR 2017 [continued from page 12]

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Musbau Solola  
Stewart Solomon  
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