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# The Active Retiree

A Newsletter for Retiree Members of United University Professions

## Rich Tyler earns 'Outstanding Retiree' award

by Karen L. Mattison  
Associate Director of Communications

**W**hen introducing Richard Tyler as this year's Pearl H. Brod Outstanding Retiree of the Year, COARM Chair Jo Schaffer outlined his union and community work—and tapped into his “quiet, unassuming” nature.

“For more than 23 years, Rich was a contingent member in the Oneonta math department ... ain't that Rich.

“For 11 years, he has been a board member, board nailer and board hammerer for the area Habitat for Humanity ... aint that Rich.

“He has served as a fundraiser for the county historical society, his church and local museum ... ain't that Rich.

“But mostly, he has been a dedicated union member ... now ain't that Rich!”

UUP honored Tyler Oct. 5 during the 2018 Fall Delegate Assembly in Buffalo.

### A 'role model' for others

Tyler retired from SUNY Oneonta in 2007—but he didn't retire from his union.

He continues to serve as chapter treasurer and academic delegate, and as a stalwart advocate for union, University and retiree issues.

“Rich is a great role model for other



Rich Tyler, left, accepts his award from UUP President Fred Kowal and COARM Chair Jo Schaffer.

retirees,” said Oneonta Chapter President Bill Simons in a letter of recommendation. “His activism, solidarity and effectiveness inspire emulation by others. Empathy, generosity, good judgment, and wit leaven his good works.”

Former statewide treasurer Rowena Blackman-Stroud credits Tyler with helping the union earn positive audit reviews from UUP's external auditors.

“Rich has an outstanding sense of team play that can teach us about the solidarity in our work,” she said. “He never loses sight of the larger picture.”

Farmingdale Chapter retiree member Barbara Maertz has worked alongside Tyler on the union's statewide Finance

Committee and on its budget subcommittee for COARM.

“Rich is steady, caring, reliable and informed,” she said.

Tyler continues to work on the Habitat for Humanity construction crew through St. Mary's Catholic Church.

“Whenever we are recruiting (construction) crews, Rich is a willing participant,” said MaryAnn Dowdell, a UUP member and president of Habitat for Humanity of Otsego County. “I always know that I can count on him. ... He comes early, works throughout the day and stays until the work is done.”

### Saying thanks

In accepting his award, Tyler remained quiet and unassuming.

He told his fellow delegates about twin sisters he taught, and how one said she had to get an A in his class to catch up with her sister.

“Today, I am catching up with my wife, who won this award three years ago,” Tyler said. “Thank you.”

## The Active Retiree

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*The opinions expressed in this newsletter are those of the authors and not necessarily the opinions of United University Professions.*

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## From our readers

# Defending military spending

### To the Editor:

In the Spring/Summer issue of *The Active Retiree*, Lawrence Wittner wrote about the proposed increase in the military budget.

As co-chair of UUP's Veterans Affairs Committee, I feel compelled to respond in the spirit of free speech ... and in the spirit of education, to share a different perspective.

My main premise is that the first duty of our federal government is the protection of its citizens from foreign and domestic enemies. It therefore follows that a large percentage of the discretionary U.S. budget is for the "military" or, as I prefer to call it, for "defense." The word "military" conjures up negative images and to be sure, I admit that a "military-industrial complex" does exist and that some of it is wasteful. (I doubt there is a way to eradicate waste, other than for defense industry and government officials to be honorable. I would love to see that in all large institutions.)

But what troubled me in Dr. Wittner's article was his reliance on opinion polls to support the notion that defense spending is too high. (The) opinions of the population matter, but consider this: If we were to ask those same citizens if the cost of a college education is too high, I suspect we would get similar results. No one likes to pay taxes, nor tuition, fees, and room and board. Simply put, we need to recognize that "bad guys" exist in 2018 and that (the U.S.) must be vigilant and ready for conflicts with capable fighting forces and advanced technology. Like a good education, it is expensive.

Dr. Wittner notes that if the defense budget was less, more could be spent on things like education. Let me share a little-appreciated fact: The military is one of the most robust educators in the



**Culkowski**

world. The military, because of its structure, accepts young people and trains them in many varied careers. This training and discipline often gives them a much-needed dose of maturity and often starts them on their way to further education in the civilian world. Think of all the veterans who use(d) the GI Bill to earn

degrees following military service.

But more than that, realize that the military partners with numerous institutions of higher learning to educate its members. As an example, following my graduation from SUNY/ESF, as a newly minted second lieutenant, I was assigned to study meteorology at North Carolina State University. Many years later, I would teach meteorology at ESF with 25 years experience as a practicing meteorologist. This was due to the military and my service to meet a critical need in the Air Force.

I encourage any reader to talk to veterans employed by SUNY and ask them about the value added by the military to their personal development.

The actual number of military members has been greatly reduced in the last few years, but the need for expensive surveillance equipment, weapons, and cyber defense has increased. I suspect that is where the money is going.

In short, I agree with Dr. Wittner that the defense budget is too large and we should exercise our freedoms to share our concerns with Congress. However, until threats to the U.S. are reduced, and rather than be exploited by (pick any enemy or terrorist group), I'll pay my taxes.

At the same time, I remain grateful that we have men and women willing to protect our freedom via a military that is fit and capable and second to none.

— **Justin Culkowski**  
**Environmental Science & Forestry**

## From the COARM Chair

# Where were you when ...?

**W**e all have specific dates tucked away in our memories that have very special meanings to us.

We have memories about the birthdays of those we love; we have memories of anniversaries of those who daily surround us; we have memories of places and times with those with whom we spend family, professional or leisure time. We have all sorts of personal memories that we can date stamp.

We also have indelible historic memories that we share with our nation, such as December 7, 1941, or D-Day 1944 or V-E day a year later. We have memories of the day FDR died. These are memorable dates that changed history.

We have memories of the day in November 1963 when JFK was assassinated in Dallas.

We have memories of September 11, 2001. We all have memories of where we were then. We all have any number of other historical and probably intensive person memories. Memories make us human and caring. And we have memories of knowing where we were and when they happened. More importantly, these events of memory changed our own history from that time on.

Don't you have a specific memory about where you were when these moments in our history happened? In reminiscing with colleagues, some were in class as students, some waving goodbye to a parent off to war, some preparing for a festive Thanksgiving dinner, some doing something as mundane as hanging clothes out to dry and certainly we were not prepared to have our lives changed.

So, where were you some 45 years ago when in 1973, five years after the passage of the Taylor Law, SUFT (AFT sup-

ported) and SPA (NEA supported) were sparring for the right to bargain collectively and to represent the SUNY professional employees. There was a merger and a vote that became our dedicated independent union—United University Professions (UUP).

Happy 45th birthday to UUP.

This is an anniversary founding year, a very important memory if you will, of the union that, throughout 45 years, has bargained for your terms and conditions of employment, salary increases, job security, sabbatical leaves, parking fees, tenure protection, professional permanent appointment, and retirement guarantees and investment choices. These are probably your Top 10 of union benefits, which were hard fought and won at any number of contract negotiations by a relatively few for the rest of us.

As retirees now, you had enjoyed—seriously enjoyed—all these benefits. Let's not forget some of the "side" benefit: You continue to have reasonable health care supplements to your Medicare and prescription drug benefits; the ability to maintain dental and vision insurance; and, for those hearing me loud and clear, insurance for quality hearing aids. Your union fought for you during what is called your active years and now, into your retirement, it continues to support you and your retiree issues through membership in COARM.

If ever there was a time to remember 1973, it is now. A great deal of what was hard fought and won is on the line again. The enormous "tax relief" bill for the wealthy 1 percent was passed in Congress a few months ago, and is now slated to be paid for, according to House Speaker Paul Ryan, by enormous future cuts to Social Security and Medicare/Medicaid.



Let's not forget who stands to benefit more in the future. Let's not let Ryan get away calling these benefits—those that you paid for during your "active" years—"entitlements."

Let's keep those memories alive by working together to sustain the gains made in the last 45 years of solidarity and support for UUP. When you are called to take a few hours out of your union supported retirement to make a few calls, or address a few envelopes or walk with a supportive political candidate, remember who voted for that tax bill or who, more positively, has had your back for 45 years.

By the way, the UUP website (<http://uupinfo.org/history/index.php>) has far more historical information that you can read at your leisure about these last 45 years. Thanks to UUP for the historic info in this short article.

Also, former UUP presidents Nuala Drescher (Buffalo State) and William Scheurman (Oswego) and UAlbany professor of history Ivan Steen are collaborating on a book soon to be published on the history of UUP.

# ELECTION DAY IS NOV. 6

## Get out and vote!



# COARM report from 2018 Fall DA

by Loraine Tyler  
Oneonta

The following are highlights from the COARM meeting held during the 2018 Fall Delegate Assembly, Oct. 5 in Buffalo.

Present: Jo Schaffer, chair; Sandra Harper and Otilie Woodruff, presidential appointees; and elected COARM members Loraine Tyler, Southern Tier; Eric Russell, Metropolitan; Bill Borgstede, Central NY; Charlie McAteer, Long Island; and Stacey Johnson, Western NY; and Membership Development Officer Tom Hoey, officer liaison.

Others: Peter Kim, NYSUT; Barbara Maertz, Farmingdale; and Walter Apple, retiree member services coordinator.

1. Spring DA Minutes (May 4, 2018)—approved as submitted.

2. Chair's Report—Schaffer

- Issue of nonmembers joining just before retiring to get retiree benefits. Support five years or longer, with an appeal process to join.
- Midterm elections are probably most crucial of any election. If we don't flip seats, Social Security and Medicare will be in jeopardy.
- Tie pre-retirement meetings with our COARM meetings, when possible.
- Schaffer is willing to attend COARM meetings around the state.
- History of UUP is coming out in the spring. COARM may give a copy to each chapter office.
- Chapter retiree officers should submit 2-3 sentences on what they are doing.
- NYSUT has moved retiree funds to cover general operating expenses. NYSUT retirees are very active, but they would like UUP's support to rectify this change.

3. Membership report—Apple

- 5,376 members. Expected to grow by 300-500 in the next few months. Approximately 500 retirees have not joined. A reminder mailing will be sent next week.

4. Treasurer Report—Maertz

- COARM is fiscally sound.
- \$453,038.82 fund balance as of Aug. 31.
- A retiree membership card will be



KAREN L. MATTISON

Elected COARM members and chapter retirees discuss several proposed constitutional amendments.

designed and distributed.

5. Regional Reports

- Budget for meetings is \$30 per person, all inclusive (food, room, parking charges)
- Requests for spring 2018-2019 meetings in the Capital District, Long Island, North Country, Western NY, Central NY, Southern Tier and Metropolitan regions were approved by committee.
- Other meetings approved: Meetings out of state to organize out-of-state retirees.
- Oct. 17, Retiree Long Island Regional Conference for mileage and conference fees for McAteer and Irene Stern. Anticipated total: \$150-\$200. Approved.

6. Old Business

- McAteer and Russell attended the Long Island Region Alliance for Retired Americans endorsement conference. Four resolutions submitted:
  - Retiree integration: Retirees should be part of locals.
  - Combating SALT tax cut limitations.
  - Support for a strong union movement.
  - Medicare Part D premium reimbursement.

7. COARM webpage—McAteer

- Can be seen on any device. Link on UUP home page under statewide com-

mittees. Limited to five items with hot links to other parts of the webpage.

8. *The Active Retiree*: Need union-related articles written by all retirees.

9. Chapter presidents may appoint Officers for Retirees to fill vacancies until regular elections.

10. New Business

- NYSUT's Kim reviewed ways retirees can become politically active.
- Proposed constitutional amendments: Several apply to retirees, such as cutting back to two DAs a year, and needing at least five votes to become a delegate.
  - Article III discussion: Chair of COARM should have a vote.
  - McAteer moved and Woodruff seconded to amend a proposed constitutional amendment, under Article III, Section 1, Subsection b.
    - “There shall be an appeals process to be established by COARM and referred to the Executive Board regarding any membership denial.” Passed.
    - Discussion on COARM chair having a vote on the Executive Board. McAteer charged with writing a resolution and submitting at the appropriate time.
    - Insurance negotiations 2019-2021.
    - Pearl Brod Award: Application review complete. No changes.

# Let's tax the rich

by Lawrence Wittner  
Albany

**W**hatever happened to the notion that rich people should pay their fair share of the cost for their country's public programs?

Progressive income taxes—designed to fund government services and facilities—go back centuries, and are based on the idea that taxes should be levied most heavily on people with the ability to pay them. In the U.S., the federal government introduced its first income tax in 1861, to cover the costs of the Civil War. Although new federal income tax legislation in the 1890s was ruled unconstitutional by the U.S. Supreme Court, the resulting public controversy led, in 1913, to passage of the 16th amendment to the Constitution, firmly establishing the legality of an income tax.

The progressive income tax—levied, at its inception, only on the wealthiest Americans—was a key demand and political success of the Populist and Progressive reformers of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. As might be expected, most of the wealthy regarded it with intense hostility, especially as the substantial costs of World War I sent their tax rates soaring. The development of jobs programs and other public services during the New Deal, capped by the vast costs of World War II and the early Cold War, meant that, by the 1950s, although most Americans paid income taxes at a modest rate, the official tax rate for Americans with the highest incomes stood at about 91 percent.

Of course, the richest Americans didn't actually pay at that rate, thanks to a variety of deductions, loopholes, and its application to only the highest increment of their income. Even so, like many of the wealthy throughout history, they deeply resented paying a portion of their income to benefit other people—people whom they often regarded as inferior to themselves. Consequently, cutting taxes for the rich became one of their top political priorities.

Facing a strong backlash from the wealthiest Americans, their corporations, and conservative politicians, the federal government began a retreat. In 1964, the top marginal tax rate was reduced to

70 percent, in 1982 to 50 percent, and, in 1988, to 28 percent. Although it was raised somewhat during the Clinton presidency, it was reduced again during the reign of George W. Bush.

The Trump-GOP tax cut of \$1.5 trillion in December 2017 provided the latest payoff to the wealthy. It lowered the top tax rate, slashed the corporate tax rate from 35 to 21 percent, and doubled exemptions from the federal inheritance tax to \$22 million per married couple. Although not all of the tax benefits went to the richest Americans, the vast bulk of them did. An estimated 83 percent of the households among America's wealthiest one-tenth of 1 percent will receive a tax break, with an average benefit of \$193,380 per year.

Why did Americans support this new raid on the federal treasury that enriches the nation's millionaires and billionaires?

Actually, they didn't. A Gallup poll of April 2017 found that 63 percent of Americans believed that upper-income people paid too little in taxes. That same month, the Pew Research Center reported that 60 percent of Americans were bothered "a lot" by the fact that "some wealthy people don't pay their fair share" of taxes. In October 2017, a Reuters/Ipsos poll discovered that three-quarters of Americans thought that the wealthiest Americans should pay more in taxes. Furthermore, surveys taken at the time by U.S. polling agencies consistently found that public support for the regressive Trump-GOP tax legislation languished in the mid-20s.

A key reason why most Americans favor taxing the rich is the traditional one: The wealthiest have the greatest ability to shoulder the nation's tax burden. After all, America's richest 1 percent now possess nearly 40 percent of the nation's wealth—almost twice the wealth held by 90 percent of the public. Indeed, it's hard to imagine why they need to add anything to the enormous wealth they have already amassed. For example, Charles and David Koch, heirs to a vast fortune and, currently, the leading champions of tax-cutting and other rightwing schemes, have a combined



Wittner

net wealth of \$120 billion. If they stopped raking in additional income and, instead, each spent \$1 million per day, they could continue doing that for over 164 years.

Conversely, nearly half of all American households cannot afford food, housing

and medical care. Why should they be taxed heavily—or at all—to fund public facilities and services that the richest Americans, with their unprecedented wealth, can easily afford to cover?

Another reason to raise taxes on the rich is that it's good for the economy. Of course, this contradicts the unverified contention of their cheerleaders that such taxation leads to job loss and economic collapse. But, in fact, as even some leading businessmen have pointed out, taxing the rich to fund public programs increases investment, boosts productivity, and creates more and better jobs. Following World War II, when the wealthiest Americans had a 91 percent tax rate and top federal tax rates on stock dividends ran between 70 and 90 percent, America experienced an enormous economic boom. Another surge of rapid economic growth occurred in the late 1990s, following federal tax hikes on wealthy investors. Only after President George W. Bush pushed through sharp cuts in taxes for the wealthy did the American economy slow and, then, collapse in the Great Recession.

Much the same pattern has emerged in the states. In 2012, Kansas slashed its tax rates, while California raised taxes on its wealthiest residents. Five years later, the Kansas economy was on life support, while California was undergoing the strongest economic growth in the nation.

Not surprisingly, states are turning increasingly to enacting a "millionaires tax," and the Trump-GOP tax cuts for the rich have become a potential political liability for the Republicans in the 2018 congressional elections.

*(Lawrence Wittner is a professor of history emeritus at the University at Albany and the author of Confronting the Bomb, Stanford University Press.)*





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# Three points! The good and bad of rule changes

by Mac Nelson  
Fredonia

**T**he sports' pages and channels are abuzz with the feats of Stephen Curry, the Golden State hotshot who rewrote the record books with his mastery of the long three-point shot in the National Basketball Association. (Not incidentally, he drove his team to new records as well.)

Many just wonder and admire, and he is indeed superb. Others think it's time to change the rules and make the shot more difficult; 23 feet is the current distance. Curry makes nearly half of his attempts. It was rarely attempted when it was new 38 years ago—coaches are a conservative breed, and they were suspicious of it. Now it is common, and it has changed the game significantly. I thought, and still think, it was a good idea, because it opened the court a bit and helped keep the NBA from becoming full court rugby football. It gave those massive bodies more room to move near the basket.

Another good move in basketball was to institute a shot clock: The offense must get off a shot within 24 seconds (30 in college, a better, mellower limit) or they lose possession. That ended the old Dean Smith Tarheel Four Corners stall, which was a bore.

Another bore is the extra point in football. The two-point conversion option improved that a little, but coaches rarely chance it. Now the NFL has moved the kick back to the 15-yard line (in 2016), so that some are actually missed, and are thus worth watching.

I don't usually like major changes in sports. A liberal in society and politics, I am more conservative here. It's not just that I don't like change; it's that many sports are very good just the way they are, and change is not necessarily going to be improvement. In 1840s baseball, 90 feet was set as the proper distance between bases. There was nothing of Mosaic Commandment about that, but it has worked out well.

Major League Baseball was recently concerned about a drop in run production, foolishly, in my view. That sort of thinking

led to the ghastly steroids era, with bloated hitters looking like the Michelin man. We do not need to return to the days (1859) when, in the first college baseball game ever played, Amherst defeated Williams 73-32 in 25 innings. Should we just shorten the base paths to 85 feet, and thus produce a lot more hits and runs? "Perish the thought," fans would yell, and they would be right. (I like close, low-scoring games, where every pitch matters—2-1 is my favorite score.)

Actually, baseball has several times done something subtler in that direction. Pitchers used to throw from 45 feet away from the plate; then 50; then (since 1893) the current 60 feet 6 inches. In 1968, Bob Gibson was so overpowering that he allowed just over one earned run per nine innings; and other pitchers were dominating batters, too. Baseball lowered the mound (that little round hill from which pitchers have thrown since 1903) from 15 to 10 inches. Hardly noticeable from the stands, but it worked: more runs were scored. Baseball worried about games taking too long; now an intentional walk is simply signaled, no balls thrown. That's OK, I guess.

It is not too long (1960s) since the 11 players who started a soccer match had to finish it. Break a leg, as one once did early in a big English match. Too bad. Suck it up. Tough it out. (He did, limping, but his team lost, of course.) Now substitutions are allowed, and that is a good thing.

And, in my view, that is about it for *good* rules changes. The rest are awful.

Americans are thought to hate ties in sports. "A tie is like kissing your sister," as one wit put it. So the major sports have increasingly found ways to break a tie: Shootouts in soccer and hockey, extra periods in football and soccer. (Extra innings in baseball and overtime in basketball have been there from the beginning, so they seem OK.) I don't see the point.



Nelson

Unless you simply have to force a result, a tie can be honorable and thrilling. Europeans and South Americans don't seem to mind them. But, then, maybe they enjoy kissing their sisters. Cricket matches sometimes last five days and *still* end in a draw! Nobody complains about that.

So this leads to my list of *bad* rules changes: Shootouts after every tie. Another even bigger, everywhere but in the Major

Leagues, is aluminum bats: Dangerous to participants, and too much in favor of the batter.

The designated hitter. Big Papi Ortiz (Boston Red Sox) was a great hitter; but he should have earned his place on the field by owning and actually using a glove. When he goofed up on defense, that is the price you should pay for his batting muscle. But since many of those who DH are often those with the biggest contracts, the DH will never disappear.

The emasculated kickoff: The NFL (a.k.a. the "No Fun League") has changed several rules here so that there is now rarely a kickoff return, which used to be one of the most exciting plays in football. (It was also the scene of the one good play in my dreary high school football career. I knocked down three guys on one kickoff return.)

The NFL does have a point. It was a play that led to serious injuries. But the whole sport does that, so it doesn't help much.

And boxing, which is just barely civil, has spawned mixed martial arts: Kick, choke and brutalize your enemy in every way you can, short of eye-gouging. Sad.

Those huge long-shafted belly putters used by those who get the putting yips with regular clubs are being banned from golf. Admittedly, they look comical and geriatric, but why outlaw them? To show golfers aren't wusses? Aren't they?

If it ain't broke, don't fix it.

(Mac Nelson lives in Brocton. His prize-winning book "TWENTY WEST: The Great Road Across America" [SUNY Press] is now out in paperback.)





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## Chapter retiree meeting: Binghamton

by **Bob Pompi**  
Binghamton

**O**n Sept. 13, 34 UUP retirees from Binghamton University and their guests met at the university Event Center for a buffet lunch, a discussion of issues facing UUP retirees, and a presentation on the restoration of a baroque painting of St. Benedict.

The retirees were joined by Jo Schaffer, COARM chair, and Walter Apple, UUP retiree member services coordinator. Corinna Kruman, retiree services and records manager of Binghamton University Human Resources, made arrangements for the venue and an outstanding buffet.

After lunch, Schaffer spoke about NYSUT-endorsed candidates and encouraged the retirees to get involved with the November midterm elections, pointing out what is at stake for this group.

Diane Butler, Ph.D., director of the university's Art Museum, informed the group about the restoration of a newly restored baroque painting, which spans four centuries and features a cut canvas, the Holocaust, efforts to recover Nazi-looted property, a Binghamton living room, and the involvement of seven different Binghamton University faculty and departments. She then graciously invited the group to join her in touring the art gallery vault to see the restored painting.