

Retirees Within the Union – 30 Years of Progress

- No other union matches or even comes close to NYSUT's retiree structure, services and programs.
 - In 1991, Representative Assembly delegates passed an amendment to the NYSUT Constitution that provided prepaid retiree membership with full participation, voting rights and a more formalized structure — the birth of retiree councils.
 - Following passage of the constitutional amendment, NYSUT hired a part-time retiree services consultant to help the retiree councils get organized, write constitutions and get officers and delegates elected in October 1991.
 - In March 1992, the first retiree-elected voting delegates attended a NYSUT RA. That was the lead story in *The NYSUT Retiree Organizer*, which became the first regularly published retiree leadership newsletter. It celebrated its 20th year of consecutive publication in 2012.
 - In 1992, NYSUT also hired a part-time secretary and a full-time PSA position and held its first annual Retiree Council Leadership Conference.
 - In 1994, NYSUT bused thousands of retirees from across the state into Albany to lobby for pension increases – for the first of many rallies.
 - In 1995, NYSUT established a nonvoting Board of Directors position for retiree co-chair of the Retiree Advisory Committee (RAC).
 - In 1996, NYSUT candidates Manny Kafka and Josephine Davenport were elected for Retiree New York State Teachers' Retirement System (NYSTRS) Board as Member and Alternate.
 - In 1997, the first Retiree Council Presidents Conference was held in Albany.
 - In 2000, NYSUT established Social Services for retirees and formed Retiree Services, part of Field and Legal Services, with a full-time secretary, two full-time PSA positions, and six part-time retiree services consultant positions in regional offices.
- Also in 2000, 10,000 retirees, including about 8,000 NYSUT members, were bused by NYSUT and other public employee unions from around the state to Albany to lobby for a Cost-of-Living Adjustment (COLA).
- In May 2001, the first NYSUT Regional Conference was held in Syracuse for Retiree Councils 7 and 8.
 - A Task Force on Retiree Services appointed by President Tom Hobart submitted a comprehensive report in November 2002. The NYSUT Board accepted these suggestions and immediately began to implement them.
 - As a result of these recommendations, delegates at the 2003 RA approved constitutional amendments that raised from one to three delegates for each retiree council, created four new Board of Director's positions and three new Election Districts:
 - ED 51 for Retiree Councils 1-13 *14-46*
 - ED 52 for Retiree Councils 14-23, 37-43
 - ED 53 for Retiree Councils 24-35



- The first three retiree ED directors were elected in October 2003:
 - ED 51 - Loretta Donlon
 - ED 52 - Judith Rudman
 - ED 53 - Tom Pappas
- In December 2003, the NYSUT Board elected the first retiree At-Large ED (51-53) director, Ruth Dworkin.
- In February 2004, the first Retiree Election District meeting was held by ED 51 Director Loretta Donlon.
- In April 2004, Retiree Council Presidents were invited for the first time to attend the Local Presidents Conference that occurs annually prior to the RA.
- In October 2004, the first contiguous ED (51-53) meeting was held in Albany by At-Large ED Director Ruth Dworkin.
- In 2005, Retiree Services was reconfigured under the Program Services Department, providing a direct connection to the officers.
- In 2006, NYSUT reunified with NEA/NY to become the one voice of education in the state.
- In 2008, Retiree Services collaborated with the NYSUT Member Records Department to develop a new membership intake form for former NEA/NY retirees to facilitate easier enrollment in their retiree councils.
- In 2010, for the first time, Retiree Services brokered an arrangement with the NYSUT Legislative Department to annually direct a set amount of VOTE-COPE funding to Retiree Services for specific advocacy and education activities.
- NYSUT has always been affiliated with AFT and, in recent years, with the Alliance for Retired Americans (AFT pays the per cap membership for all NYSUT members).
- In New York, NYSUT works collaboratively with NEA-Retired.
- In New York, NYSUT is affiliated with NYSARA and pays the per cap membership dues for its members and also pays per cap membership for our Florida retirees in FLARA.
- NYSUT Retiree Services is currently staffed with a manager/director of constituency services (Jennifer Kaseman), a PSA position (Swinka Richards), a part-time CWA Administrative Assistant position and 10 retiree services consultants across the state and one in Florida.
- Retiree Services continues to offer workshops and plans to offer 14 regional membership conferences.
- What began in 1991 with 28,902 retirees, 62 percent of whom were UFT members, has become a movement of more than 260,000 retirees.
- Many times since retiree membership was first granted in 1976, some thought the zenith had been reached, but NYSUT keeps breaking the mold and reinventing retiree membership structure, services and programming.
- 2021 marked the 30th anniversary of the establishment of the NYSUT Retiree Councils and retiree representation at the RA, as a result of the 1991 amendment to the NYSUT Constitution.