

# The Communicator

The official publication of the NYS Public Employees Federation, AFL-CIO

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# PEF WINS \$ BIG WITH NYS BUDGET



April 2022 | Volume 40 No.3

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Volume 40 No.3

April 2022 (0745-6514)

The Official Publication of the New York State Public Employees Federation, AFL-CIO  
1168-70 Troy-Schenectady Rd., Latham, NY 12110-1006

The Communicator is published monthly, except for January and August, for members of the New York State Public Employees Federation.

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# The President's Message By WAYNE SPENCE

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## New York State answers PEF's call to Fund Our Future

Happy Spring PEF brothers and sisters! This time of year always brings optimism, but the New York State Legislature and Governor have given us extra reasons to be hopeful this time of year. [The 2022-23 State budget is filled with priorities](#) you helped bring to the attention of lawmakers. From the first meaningful pension reform in years to bonuses for healthcare workers, restored in-patient beds at the Office of Mental Health system, and loan forgiveness for nurses, this is the first budget that actually increases state expenditures since I've been president of PEF.

I'm reminded of a meeting I had with Governor Hochul in Nov. 2021 when I first provided her with literature explaining our [Fund Our Future campaign](#). We conceived the campaign and built the coalition to lift up the critical work performed by PEF members and fight back against the harmful consequences of privatization. That meeting sowed the seeds for a state budget that takes the first steps toward meeting those goals. As always, there is more work to be done and we are committed to it, but in the spirit of this season of renewal, I want to thank you for the work you've done so far. PEF members and friends generated more than 18,000 letters to lawmakers this budget cycle and it's clear they made a difference.

This month also featured the return of the annual conference of the New York State Association of Black, Puerto Rican, Hispanic & Asian Legislators. I was honored to be part of a workshop focused on restorative justice that you can [read about in this issue](#). PEF is the loudest union voice opposed to the current parole laws and we will work hard to amend them as the legislative session continues in Albany.

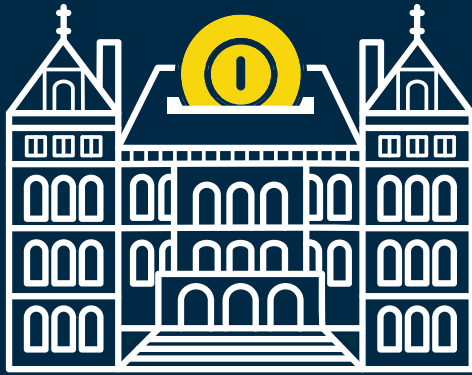
I'd also like to draw your attention to one more story in this issue about [a contract fight involving public workers in Los Angeles County](#). When I was asked to send a PEF delegation to participate in an escalation campaign run by SEIU Local 721, I didn't hesitate. It's important that organized labor act together when the issues resonate beyond a local area. Local 721's fight against privatizing public jobs for their 95,000 members is the same fight we wage here in New York. And many of the affiliate leaders who helped organize and execute their march in downtown L.A. at the end of last month will be joining PEF in Albany later this month as we conduct a membership blitz.

You'll read more about that in our May issue. Until then, please continue to stay safe and thank you for your solidarity.

In Unity,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Wayne Spence". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal line extending from the end of the name.

Wayne Spence  
PEF President



# State budget delivers big wins for PEF

By SHERRY HALBROOK

State budgets are usually a mixed bag, at best, for PEF members, but this year the 2022-23 state budget is mainly good news.

The last of the state budget bills were passed Saturday morning, April 9, and PEF President Wayne Spence took pleasure in reporting to members, "Many of PEF's top priorities are included."

The budget, which totals approximately \$220 billion, contains a 3 percent boost in funding for state operations.

In fact, "It's the first non-austerity budget since I've been PEF president," said Spence, who first took office as president in August 2015.

A rapid analysis of the budget bills by PEF revealed numerous important wins for the union. These include:

- **Pension reform:** Working in conjunction with many other unions, PEF secured improvements to Tiers 5 and 6 of the New York State and Local Employees Retirement System, which will hopefully improve the state's recruitment and retention efforts and lift staffing levels. The 10-year vesting period was reduced to five and lawmakers also agreed to exempt COVID-19-related overtime earnings from mandatory employee payroll contributions to pensions. This change applies retroactively to 2020 and through 2024.
- **Health care bonus:** The budget establishes a new workforce retention bonus of up to \$3,000 for state and other employees who work in health care or mental hygiene positions. PEF tried to get this bonus for all employees who were deemed essential during the pandemic, and the union will continue to fight for bonus pay on behalf of the mission-critical employees who were not included.

- **More beds for mental health patients:** Funding was included in agency budgets for addiction services and up to 100 additional state-operated inpatient mental-health-stabilization beds. "This was a major request in our 'Fund Our Future' campaign to help address the mental health crisis in the state and provide critical services to some of New York's most vulnerable citizens," Spence said.

- **Nurse loan forgiveness:** The budget creates the Nurses Across New York Program that will focus on paying the student loans of nurses who choose to work in hard-to-staff areas of the state. "This idea was first advanced by the PEF Nurses Committee," Spence said. The benefit will go to both registered professional and licensed nurses in high-demand titles or shortage areas.

Those are just some of the budget highlights that PEF has identified so far. For more information check out this analysis from PEF's Legislative Department.

"PEF was proud to be part of this collaborative process with elected officials as we work to rebuild our state," Spence said. "I am grateful for the work of PEF's Legislative Department, along with that of the Statewide Political Action Committee and all the activists who lobbied lawmakers on behalf of PEF's priorities. PEF members, friends and families generated more than 18,000 letters this budget cycle and it clearly made a difference. Thank you for all that you do and I promise we will continue to advocate on your behalf."



# **PEF Town Hall**

## **Wednesday, April 20, at 6 p.m.**

Join us to hear the gains made by your union in this year's State budget!

If your phone number is not automatically called, just dial (800) 263-5977 to join.

**Click to register**



Three candidates vying for New York State Governor – Gov. Kathy Hochul, Congressman Lee Zeldin and Congressman Tom Suozzi – addressed the PEF Executive Board seeking the union’s endorsement, answering questions submitted by the membership on the nursing shortage, telecommuting, the Fund Our Future campaign, privatization and toxic workplace culture.

# Executive Board approves 2022-23 budget, hears from gubernatorial candidates

By KATE MOSTACCIO

The PEF Executive Board met March 24 and 25 in Troy, N.Y., voting on the 2022-23 budget, hearing from three gubernatorial candidates and conducting other business of the union.

## 2022-23 budget

PEF Secretary-Treasurer Joe Donahue presented the 2022-23 budget for approval, with proposed \$28,657,861 in revenue and the same in expenditures – a zero net change budget.

He outlined amendments to the Dec. 13, 2021 financial statements to account for higher than expected expenditures, including printing costs for the 2019-22 contract book; increased office supply, communications and minor equipment costs for the new PEF Headquarters; and an increase in janitorial and security expenses.

The advertising budget increased to cover the Fund Our Future campaign and to purchase PPE for members. Scholarship funding, affiliation fees and professional fees also increased.

Donahue pointed out the new vendor for election balloting, Educational Vistas, is more expensive than the previous vendor and the need for running Executive Board seat balloting every quarter costs the union \$20,000 each time, regardless of whether there are candidates.



PEF Statewide Women’s Committee celebrating Women’s History Month

“We have to run the opportunity for an election, even if people don’t run, we are still charged each time we do it,” he said, urging all members of the board to seek out members who may be interested in filling those vacancies.

Membership dues saw a bump in the fall due to retroactive raises in the new contract, but membership numbers continue to decline. Donahue said PEF will continue to look at ways to increase those numbers, including hiring two new organizers.

“For the 2021-22 budget year, membership was estimated at 50,000,” he said. “These rates have continued to decline



throughout the fiscal year, leading to a conservative estimate of 47,000 members for the 2022-23 fiscal year.”

In the coming year, proposed expenditures are up largely due to the anticipated return to in-person meetings, activities and the 2022 PEF Convention in Niagara Falls.

“We cannot increase budget items to pre-pandemic levels, but we want to be able to hold more in-person and that will mean additional costs,” he said. “We’re here to serve the members.”

The board approved the budget. Board approves PAC endorsements

The Statewide Political Action Committee recommended candidate endorsements to the executive board for the following candidates for attorney general, Senate districts (SD) and Assembly districts (AD):

Leticia James, Attorney General; Kevin Parker (SD 21); Brian Kavanaugh (SD 26); Luis Sepulveda (SD 32); Cordell Cleare (SD30); Robert Jackson (SD 31); Erik Dilan (AD 54); Peter Abbate (AD 49); Vivian Cook (AD 32); Kevin Cahill (AD 103); Tom Abinanti (AD 92); Michael Benedetto (AD 82); and Eddie Gibbs (AD 68).

“This is a major part of what political action committees across the regions do,” said Vice President Randi DiAntonio, who chairs PEF’s Statewide Political Action Committee. “Regions have the responsibility to send out questionnaires, interview and determine which candidates in their regions they want to recommend for endorsement. The process is open to all members in the region.

“PEF does not generally get involved in early endorsements in primary races,” she continued. “However, sometimes it behooves us to get involved. Good allies may need our support to remain in office.”

The endorsements were approved by the board.

### Gubernatorial candidates address board



Three candidates vying for New York State Governor – Gov. Kathy Hochul, Congressman Tom Suozzi and Congressman Lee Zeldin – addressed the PEF Executive Board seeking the union’s endorsement, answering questions submitted by the membership on the nursing shortage, telecommuting, the Fund Our Future campaign, privatization and toxic workplace culture.

Suozzi took the stage first on March 24, followed by Zeldin, and Hochul addressed the board on March 26. New York City Public Advocate Jumaane Williams, who is also running in the Democratic gubernatorial primary, was unable to attend.

“This is it, right now, this is the time we all need to pull together,” Suozzi said. “We need to start doing things that serve the people. We have got to fight for the middle class and unions are the way to do it. We have to fight for our unions.”

Zeldin said New York is very different right now than in previous years.

“People don’t feel safe on the streets, in the subways,” he said. “New Yorkers across the state are deciding, ‘That’s it’ and they’re leaving.”

Hochul said it’s an honor to be surrounded by the dedicated and compassionate members of PEF.

“I’ve been defending public sector workers since those days,” she said, recounting her family’s history of social justice. “You’re doing the work because you believe in public safety, health care, front line workers in every sense of the word.”

On the nursing shortage and exodus of nurses from the state, Suozzi said the key is figuring out how to pay nurses salaries that are competitive with the private sector and that the disparity is demoralizing and unfair.

“I love nurses,” he said. “My mother was a nurse. I have great respect for nurses. We have got to figure out how to pay our nurses to be competitive with the private sector.”

Zeldin said nobody should be fired for not getting the COVID vaccine and nurse pay needs to be competitive.

“If they are not paid enough for what they do, they end up being hired away to someplace paying more,” he said. “Some people just love the work. A lot of people are early in their careers and the benefits aren’t as generous.”

Hochul pointed to her first budget as reflection of her dedication to nursing.

“A budget for the first time ever leaned hard into shoring up the nursing profession,” she said. “The disinvestment has gone on for too long. Yes, this is bold and ambitious and expensive, but if we don’t make these investments now, shame on us.”

PEF members stepped up and successfully telecommuted since the start of the pandemic. The membership wants to know if the next governor will continue or improve remote work options.

Suozzi said telecommuting made life easier for a lot of people, but it must be balanced and fair.

"Some jobs you can do remotely, but not everybody can telecommute. We need to set up an accountability system," he said.

Zeldin said telecommuting makes sense for many occupations, but some people are more productive than others when working from home.

"You need to keep a short leash," he said. "You can't paint all people with the same brush."

Hochul said she would be willing to come to the table and negotiate telecommuting with PEF.

"This COVID experience has given us an opportunity to examine new ideas," she said. "This is something we will consider in all our collective bargaining agreements. The five-day work week is probably over. But there also needs to be a sense of fairness involved."

Investing in the future of New York, both the workforce and the services it provides, is crucial for a thriving New York.

Zeldin said investing in state services can actually save money by reducing the number of clients who slip through the cracks.

"Investing saves money in the long run," he said. "A lot of people will rely more on the government if you don't help them."

Hochul credited a conversation with President Spence for inspiring investments in her budget.

"We're going to continue investing," she said. "It means hiring more people. There should not be vacant positions. If a position was created, obviously there was a need for it. I want New York to be a model employer."

The Tier 6 pension plan falls short and PEF is working in the legislature to amend the plan.

Suozzi said good pay, good benefits and a robust pension draw people into public service and that needs to be studied and discussed.

Zeldin said the pension is a huge recruitment and retention tool. "We have to look at the entire package," he said. "Think creatively. Pensions are one piece."

Hochul was willing to discuss pension reform.

The fight against privatization calls for keeping state work in the hands of state employees. PEF advocates for looking inward, not out to contractors, for projects and services. A cost-benefit analysis is vital to a fair and transparent process.

Suozzi supports cost-benefit analyses and using the state workforce, pointing out that the previous administration brought in outside contracts frequently.

Zeldin also recognized the importance of cost-benefit analysis and said hiring consultants to tell you what you already know is a waste of money.

"The best source of ideas comes from inside the agency," he said.

PEF members across the state face a toxic workplace. Candidates were asked what they would do to hold management accountable and lift up employees.

Suozzi said there needs to be accountability and there must be rules and regulations and a process to follow. "I believe New York can be the model employer," he said.

Zeldin said the culture trickles from the top down and some people think they are more important than others. "We don't want an emperor government," he said. "You need to respect your peers."

Hochul pledged to change the culture and how abuses are handled.

"No longer should someone have to report an abuse to the same people who are protecting the people who are doing it," she said.

The PEF regional PACs will meet and make a recommendation to the Statewide Political Action Committee who will ultimately make an endorsement recommendation for governor that the Executive Board will consider at their June 2022 meeting.



### Organizing 'Blitz' in Albany

Late next month, in partnership with AFT, and with help from an SEIU grant, PEF will hold a membership "blitz" in Albany, knocking on doors and engaging with potential members face-to-face.





"A blitz is a mobilization effort to reengage members of the union and to do it in a very personal, one-on-one, way," said PEF Director of Organizing Dan Carpenter. "The last time we did this, in 2017, there was an 18-person team broken into six teams that went and visited 27 different worksites in a week. They knocked on 1,300 doors and had one-on-one conversations with members across Region 8."

PEF organizers participated in other union blitzes in Alaska, Montana and Colorado, Carpenter said. Now is the time to bring the blitz back to PEF, since new hires have to opt in to union membership after the Janus decision and reaching them has been difficult.

"During COVID we lost the ability to hold in-person traditional onboarding," Carpenter said. "A number of people fell through the cracks. We are taking the opportunity to work with AFT. They bring 18 members from across the nation and we're going to bring 18 staff and members and we are going to do this all over again. The goal is to knock on 1,000 doors and hold 50 to 55 worksite meetings in a week."

Carpenter said the team hopes to reach at least the 500 full-time hires who are not currently in the union. The blitz will take place April 24-29, 2022.

This is just the first blitz. PEF plans to use it as a model to hold mini-blitzes around the state.

### **Legislative engagement and updates**

Texting is a successful way to get members involved in legislative letter-writing campaigns, said Vice President DiAntonio. She reported members submitted 1,713 letters on telecommuting; 459 on the ITS budget; 1,041 on the social safety net; 996 on health care bonuses; 484 on reinvestment to DOCCS programs; 545 on design-build; and 8,538 on pension reform.

"There are lots of opportunities to engage members over this," DiAntonio said. "This is how we communicate our issues with our legislators. They do take note of the numbers of letters. Getting thousands of emails, letters, pushes on Facebook, wherever we can let them know where our concerns are."

Members are encouraged to make sure PEF has an accurate cell phone number and personal email address so they can participate in member actions.

PEF Legislative Director Patrick Lyons said this is a very different year in Albany.

"This is really the first year that we're not on a major defensive in terms of the state budget," he said.

Top priorities in Albany this year include those outlined in the Fund Our Future campaign, as well as health care investments, cost-benefit analysis and design-build, OPWDD and OMH service investments, amending the 'Less is More' parole law, significant funding of SUNY hospitals, and reforming Tiers 5 and 6 of the New York State pension plan.

### **Legal department addresses vaccine, testing mandate cases**

As of March 23, 2022, there were 383 members suspended and facing termination on allegations they failed to comply with the vaccine mandate or that they were subject to a vaccinate or test mandate and they have not complied with testing. Those numbers continue to increase on a weekly basis.

"We are actively representing hundreds of members," said General Counsel Edward Greene. "Arbitration hearings are currently under way in dozens of cases and we are starting to see some arbitration awards."

The breakdown of cases as of March 23rd includes 236 for vaccine mandate non-compliance and 147 for testing, Greene reported. Successes so far have come in cases where procedural defenses have been raised. "Our victories to date have been where we have identified procedural irregularities or due process violations," he said. "We are continuing the fight. Our attorneys are engaged every day in one or more hearings in these cases."

There have been victories on these procedural issues, with members reinstated and the issuance of backpay and accruals that amount to tens of thousands of dollars to members.



PEF President Wayne Spence

### Training, education benefits you may be missing

Through the PS&T contract's Article 15, members can participate in Public Service Workshop Program (PSWP) trainings, continuing legal education, a nursing grant program, leadership development, certification and licensure exam fee and college tuition reimbursements and more.

"I think many of our members don't know about a lot of the offerings in our contract," said President Spence. "They don't even know some of the stuff we have at Membership Benefits. I suspect members are spending their hard-earned money on programs and they don't know they can utilize some of these."

Between the 2016 and 2019 agreement, 16,261 state employees participated in 779 in-person PSWP workshops ranging from project management to data analysis, to professional writing. There were 10 Leadership Development Program offerings, with 390 PEF members participating. Seventy-eight nurses completed the Nurse Leadership Development Program.

Through the College Tuition Reimbursement Program, 12,990 applications were reimbursed to the tune of \$16,976,595. Of that, \$3,217,383 was reimbursed through the Nurses Enhanced program.

Direct any questions about any of the programs to [kim.loccisano@pef.org](mailto:kim.loccisano@pef.org).

The PEF Executive Board will meet again on June 9 and 10, 2022, in Albany.

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**NOBLE EFFORT** – Following the workshop, members of NOBLE gathered for a group photo. Shown third and fourth from the left are PEF member Yamel Speight-Miller and PEF President Wayne Spence.

# How do you keep public safe, but avoid over-policing?

By **SHERRY HALBROOK**

Criminal justice and public safety weighed heavily on the minds of New Yorkers attending the 2022 New York State Association of Black, Puerto Rican, Hispanic & Asian Legislators annual conference April 8-10 in Albany.

PEF President Wayne Spence was among five panelists at a popular workshop April 9 on “The Impact of Restorative Justice in Public Safety, which was sponsored by state Sen. Leroy Comrie and the National Organization of Black Law Enforcement Executives (NOBLE). The panelists shared their insights and observations about how New York City’s new mayor and how his administration should deal with the uptick in crime while balancing the needs for reform within the criminal justice system and the city’s Department of Corrections.

In addition to Spence, the panelists included Kings County (Brooklyn) District Attorney Eric Gonzalez, New York Police Department Transportation Chief Kim Royster, Suffolk County Police Commissioner Rodney Harrison, and Elias Husamudeen, former president of the New York City Corrections Officers Benevolent Association. The workshop was moderated by Geoffrey Eaton, president of the Mid-Manhattan Branch of the NAACP.

Spence and Husamudeen stressed the importance of supporting the public employees who provide parole and corrections services.

Spence said he recently heard someone suggest that parole duties could be privatized and left to contractors. That is a totally flawed and irresponsible idea, he said. “It’s utter nonsense. There is no vacation for a parole officer. Your responsibility never ends, even when you are on vacation. There is always work to be done.”



**SUPPORT PUBLIC EMPLOYEES** – Workshop panelists PEF President Wayne Spence and Elias Husamudeen, former president of the NYC Corrections Officers Benevolent Association, make the case for properly funding public services and letting public employees do their jobs.

Spence said that when he became a parole officer staffing levels were high enough that the officer could accompany a parolee on a job search and talk to prospective employers about tax breaks and other advantages to help parolees become self-supporting and law-abiding citizens.

“We had 1,200 parole officers then. Now we have fewer than 800,” Spence said. “How about funding us and letting us do our jobs?”

“We’ve watched policies pack a lot of jails, and now we’re going to unpack jails,” Spence said. Concern for reducing incarceration can go too far and completely overlook how it affects the public. “When somebody’s kid gets killed, don’t tell me the killer gets a pass!” His passion on this point drew a strong reaction from the audience.



"There is no criminal justice reform if you don't include corrections, parole and probation," Husamudeen said. "Reform should be done inside detention centers." New York City spends approximately 87 percent of its corrections budget on staffing, and that doesn't leave much for programs to help prisoners learn skills to turn their lives around. Today, you must have at least an associate degree to be hired as a corrections officer in New York City, he said, and 90 percent of the correctional officers have degrees of some kind. They could be sharing skills and teaching prisoners the way it was done several decades ago.

"In 2020, the city Corrections Department paid \$25 million to not-for-profits (for services). No one held them accountable," Husamudeen said. "The recidivism rate is 43 percent."

Gonzalez said it's important to be careful when partnering with community-based, not-for-profit organizations. The job demands leaders who have demonstrated the necessary skills and experience to support communities and guide residents away from gang violence and other criminal behavior. A big challenge in keeping the public safe, he said, is finding ways to return people who have been convicted of crimes to their communities "in a safe way."

The DA agreed with Husamudeen. "We know community-based organizations will play a role as we get healthier and crime goes down, but we have to have accountability for the investments when money gets spent, but nothing gets done," said Gonzalez.

Royster said structure, transparency and accountability are all important when trying to break the pattern of people being repeatedly victimized.

"We must have structure (in organizing services) and make sure the right people are working on the right issues. We need to focus resources on the right people and they have to know what's going on," Royster said.

"Many people are looking for different solutions besides incarceration," Gonzalez said. He added that many of the individuals who are convicted of crimes also have mental health and addiction issues that affect their behavior in the community.

Royster said, "We in the police department need to recognize how people feel and make sure it's equitable. We need to look at people as human beings. We need to be transparent and work together with other agencies and groups. We must make sure to provide a service to those who are underserved." Ultimately, she said, "We have to make sure justice is served."

Harrison commented on the need to "hold each level accountable." He said it's important to see "what kind of assistance and help are we getting them, can we modify our interactions to prevent crime and avoid arrests and putting

people before a judge? Every layer of (the criminal justice continuum) "needs to look at what we can do better."

Members of the audience shared their concerns, ideas and questions. Cynthia Tucker said it is important to do more to give children the skills, knowledge and values they will need as adults. "We need to educate our children in school so they won't go to jail," she said.

When an audience member called for police and public services to protect people and "lift them up, instead of over-policing," Royster said she believes, "We must reform internally, (in order) to reform externally."



**WELCOME** – PEF Membership Benefits Program Administrator Stephanie McLean-Beathley and PEF Vice President Darlene Williams greet visitors to the union's booth at the legislative conference.



**N.Y. Attorney General  
Tish James**



**U.S. Rep.  
Grace Meng (D-N.Y.)**

# Attorney General James, Congresswoman Meng bring insights to PEF Women’s event

By **SHERRY HALBROOK**

“Strengthening Women’s Leadership” was the subject of the final Women’s History Month program offered by the PEF Statewide Women’s Committee March 30 via Zoom, and it featured state Attorney General Letitia James and Congresswoman Grace Meng, who represents New York’s 6th Congressional District in Queens. State Sen. Jessica Ramos, who was scheduled to join them, was involved in state budget negotiations and could not attend.

Also participating were PEF President Wayne Spence, Vice Presidents Sharon DeSilva, Darlene Williams and Randi DiAntonio, and Women’s Committee Chair Scarlett Ahmed.

James and Meng talked about the many obstacles and challenges they have encountered and overcome to reach their current positions of authority and power, and what they have learned about advancing women’s perspectives and achieving balance in the halls of power.

James is not only the first woman of color to be elected state attorney general, an office she has held since 2019, she is also the first woman of color to hold any statewide office in New York.

“I’ve often been the ‘only’ in the room,” James said. She recalled that when she was a public defender, judges and court staff often failed to recognize that she was an attorney and assumed she was possibly the mother of a defendant.

Meng is the first and only Asian American member of Congress from New York state. She previously served in the state Assembly where, “I was the only Asian in the Legislature, so I couldn’t be part of an Asian caucus. But the Black, Puerto-Rican and Hispanic Caucus invited me to join it.”

Both women said it is often a challenge for them to be heard and respected by the men with whom they work, and they also must overcome racial and cultural differences.

“We’ve got to speak loud on behalf of our constituents. Men tell me that I speak too loud, but sometimes that’s the only way to be heard when they are controlling the debate,” James said. She recalled a woman at a meeting who kept apologizing for interrupting the men so she could get the chance to make a point. “She was really getting on my nerves and finally I told her to stop apologizing, and just demand her place in the debate.

“As women, we are still fighting for equal pay and equal rights,” James said.

PEF Vice President Randi DiAntonio said that even in state service the job titles such as nurse that are predominantly held by women are often paid less than the titles predominantly held by men.

“As a woman you will face challenges that no man will ever face,” James said. “Women would not have made the





Join us March 30th at 6:00pm for Women's History Month Talk: "Strengthening Women's Leadership" via Zoom!



N.Y. Attorney General Tish James



U.S. Rep. Grace Meng (D-N.Y.)

advances that we have made if it were not for (the support of) organized labor."

She and Meng agreed that it is important to speak up for their weakest and most powerless constituents.

Meng, who is now serving her fifth two-year term in the U.S House of Representatives, said that at first she had to overcome self-doubts about "belonging" in the white-male dominated halls of Congress.

"Men are over-represented in many halls of power," Meng said.

"You never know what you say or do that might make a difference for someone," Meng said. "You are changing the standard of what leadership looks like."

James, who previously served on the New York City Council, noted that women now make up a majority of the council and a woman is council president.

Meng said that her strong desire to speak up for the people she represents helped her overcome her doubts and fears about being in Congress. For example, she said she has spoken out about the need for women in homeless shelters to get feminine hygiene products, such as pads and tampons.

"A seventh grade girl wrote to me and told me about this," Meng said. So, she brought that important, but overlooked, concern to her fellow lawmakers. "I think the men are very tired of hearing me talk about menstrual periods, but we are literally there to speak for people who have no voice."

James wholeheartedly agreed, saying, "I was taught to stand up for those who are locked out of power."

James said that she has allowed the employees at the state Law Department to work remotely and they just finally returned to their offices for the first time on April 4, but she will continue to offer them hybrid and flexible schedule options to help those who have continuing child and other dependent-care responsibilities at home.

"We have lots of lawyers working in our department, but I feel it is important to apply the same standards (and options) for administrative staff," James said.

Meng commended her. "As government continues to stall on (passing a law providing) full-pay family leave, that's really important for women and those who must care for dependents, especially women of color who are really affected by this. Moms can't go back to work if there's no one to care for their children."

Returning to the pre-pandemic status quo just isn't good enough, James said.

"We can't return to normal. We must return to a fairer workplace. We must provide for childcare," James said.

DiAntonio recalled that daycare used to be offered on site at many state campuses and it was "such an advantage, especially for staff who had to work extra shifts."

Funding for those worksite child daycare centers was provided in the PS&T contracts in PEF's early years, but the demand diminished as the state began closing the psychiatric and developmental centers and moving to community-based services.

The speakers and PEF leaders and members in attendance all agreed that it is important to help advance women and achieve more balance in creating public policy.

Meng cited two ways to do that: Mentoring women, especially young women who are trying to advance; and being visible and public as female leaders.

"When girls see us in professional or leadership positions, it opens their minds to the possibilities for them," Meng said.

"We are the first, but we cannot be the last," James said. "We must love, embrace and encourage women."

The committee ended the program with a music video of women dancing together and singing the 1979 hit song by Sister Sledge, "We Are Family!"





## Everyday PEF Heroines Recognized

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For the second year in a row, during Women's History month in March, PEF recognized and celebrated female members who have demonstrated significant accomplishments or leadership. Members were asked to nominate women in the union's ranks who have demonstrated at least one of the following qualities:

- Leadership
- Service and community engagement
- Key characteristics of a leader
- Committed to diversity, equity and inclusion
- Continued support of union values

Women's History Month was established by Congress in 1987 to address the fact that, "the role of American women in history has been consistently overlooked and undervalued in the body of American history" and that to remedy this "the President is requested to issue a proclamation calling upon the people of the United States to observe such month with appropriate ceremonies and activities." (Public Law 110-9) In his 1987 proclamation, President Ronald Reagan stated: "I call upon all Americans to mark this month with appropriate observances to honor the achievements of American women."

The following PEF members were honored and recognized. Included below their title and agency is a quote from the individual who nominated them.







**Melissa Mead**  
**Disability Analyst 3**  
**OTDA**

"Melissa had such a strong work ethic and knew the value of her Union. Up until COVID, she drove herself to work nearly every day, as her health permitted, and was faithful and dedicated to the state of New York. She also documented her own end of life. One message simply stated, 'It's not COVID.'"

**Gina Lopez**  
**Parole Officer**  
**DOCCS**

"Gina is the division leader for New York State parole. She has really shined over the past year as a vocal advocate for the needs of officers and the parolees on their caseloads. Gina has traveled the state, engaging members in organizing and advocacy work through rallies and media campaigns to raise awareness around the Less Is More reform legislation."

**Randi DiAntonio, PEF Vice President**  
**Licensed Master Social Worker**  
**OPWDD**

"Randi has been a constant support of the PEF members. She is always available if there is a problem. She is committed to helping all PEF members."

**Leslie Huston**  
**Parole Officer**  
**DOCCS**

"PO Huston demonstrates the qualities of a leader on a daily basis. She selflessly teaches, coaches and mentors anyone who crosses her path. She is always observant and looking out for a fellow parole officer who may be having a bad day."

**Nora Higgins**  
**Teaching and Research Center Nurse 2, Region 12**  
**Coordinator**  
**Stony Brook Hospital**

"She goes above and beyond every day in all she does. Nora shows her commitment by the actions she takes. She talks the talk and walks the walk. We are fortunate to have such a wonderful and committed person in our union."

**Shaquana Perry**  
**Recreation Worker**  
**OMH**

"She runs a nonprofit for those in need and is always working in her community to make it better."

**Carmen Pimentel**  
**Teaching and Research Center Nurse 2**  
**Downstate Medical Center**

"Carmen is a true and compassionate nurse at SUNY Downstate Medical Center in Brooklyn. She sees to it that all the patients in her unit receive excellent care. She supports her staff and makes good decisions. She's diligent and hardworking."

**Lasoria Thomas**  
**Teaching and Research Center Nurse 3**  
**Downstate Medical Center**

"A leader is a person who directs the group of nurses she works with to become the best nurses they can be without judgment. Mrs. Thomas demonstrates this quality every day at work."

**Muriel Hardy-Lee**  
**Social Work Assistant 3, PEF Trustee**  
**OPWDD**

"Muriel is our union rep and is always advocating for our rights as well as hers. They have tried to cut into her union hours, and she stands up to the administration and never is unavailable to fight for us. She gets things done like no one I have ever seen in her position."

**Michelle Carter**  
**Addictions Counselor 3**  
**OASAS**

"Michelle served as a shop steward and council leader, and with the support of leadership was able to advocate and execute a plan for the safety of PEF members to include a safe enclosed nursing station. Nurses were acknowledged and team meetings were held. She advocates for social justice and supports the team."

**Jenny Blake**  
**Nurse 2 Psychiatric**  
**OASAS**

"Jenny has poured her creativity into the Bronx ATC by her acts of kindness and appreciation by honoring Black History Month, Womenswear Month, Nurses Month, all holidays and creating billboards for members that we have lost throughout the years. She takes the lead in these projects that allow the agency and visitors alike to see the commitment to service and how proud she is to be a person of service."

**Carmela Triolo**  
**Standards Compliance Analyst 2**  
**OMH**

"Carmela is steadfast, persistent and committed in her work as our PEF Steward. She is always available to answer questions, offer support and seek answers. Many colleagues are hesitant to speak up for fear of adverse reactions from management. Carmela speaks for them and is courteously persistent even when she is not treated respectfully."

**Geraldine Stella**  
**Director, PEF Health & Safety Department**

"Geraldine is committed to making significant changes in DOCCS facilities to make them safer for all employees. She is 100% dedicated to the union mission and goes above and beyond the scope of her duties to guide and assist employees who require help."

**Leisa Abraham**  
**Psychologist 2, Region 3 Coordinator**  
**OPWDD**

"Leisa is hardworking, honest and committed to our union – she is focused and dedicated to improving the lives of the members of Region 3 and the individuals with developmental disabilities that she serves. Leisa has delivered masks and goodie bags to our frontline heroes, met with members to encourage them to become stewards at the School for the Blind, and set up appreciation and letter-signing events at all work sites."

**Pam Cockle**  
**Supply Chain Manager**  
**Allegany County Employees**

"Pam has represented her members at Allegany County Employees as their Council Leader for many years. She has proven to be exceptionally adept at contract enforcement and our grievance procedure. Pam holds regular local LM meetings and is fearless in asserting right over wrong."

**Shelby Wisneski**  
**Social Work Assistant 3**  
**OPWDD**

"Shelby represents our OPWDD members as a Council Leader across multiple regions. She holds regular meetings and promotes PEF's values and keeps her members informed. She is a leader who knows how to follow through."

**Jennifer Bradt**  
**Nurse Administrator**  
**OPWDD**

"I have known Jennifer for a long time as I first met her at a Region 3 nurse meeting which she chaired. Her Leadership abilities were apparent then and I was impressed with her professionalism and the respect that the 100+ nurses bestowed upon her that day."

**Erica Pandolfo**  
**Senior Attorney**  
**OPWDD**

"Ms. Pandolfo is a strong advocate for self-determination and supported decision making for people with developmental disabilities. She is passionate about ensuring safe transitions from special education to appropriate adult services for individuals entering into our service system."

**Susanne “Shoshana” Stein**  
**Management Specialist**  
**DOH**

“Shoshana is a great supervisor. I just started at the state and she’s been fundamental to finding my place in the agency. Not just for me, either – everyone I’ve worked with has told me how lucky I am to be working under her. She’s always been upfront and clear, and she’s made coming to work a real pleasure.”

**Nilima Chokshi**  
**Dietitian 2**  
**OMH**

“She leads and encourages every person in our department and other departments to be a team to improve quality of service for our patients. She has been at RPC for almost 30 years, and it shows how deeply she cares about our patients and staff/peers caring for those patients.”

**Elizabeth Morrisey**  
**Temporary Assistance Specialist 2**  
**OTDA**

“She has shown a leadership role in spite of the lack of a speech supervisor for over a year.”

**Vivian Falto**  
**Associate in Education Children with Disabilities**  
**SED**

“Vivian has worked tirelessly with local PEF leaders at the Shirley Chisholm Bldg. in Region 11 to fight for health and safety concerns of our members across multiple agencies. As a result, PEF has put together a team of activists and staff who are organizing and improving the work environment for everyone.”

**Renee Schemitz**  
**Social Work Supervisor 1 LCSW**  
**OMH**

“She is always the one to help and get down and dirty when needed. She values her staff with understanding and during the pandemic she made sure staff was always safe. She is not only a great leader, but also always there for clients as well as staff.”

**Amy Bonner**  
**Senior Recreation Therapist**  
**OASAS**

“Amy has been a vocal advocate in her workplace. She stands up for her coworkers to be treated with fairness and respect. She took the lead on coordinating her colleagues in forming their own division to ensure they’d be better represented at the local level with management.”

**Michele Silsby**  
**Senior Case Manager, Region 1 Coordinator**  
**Roswell Park**

“As the Region 1 Coordinator, Michele has exemplified leadership. Michele uses her leadership skills to advance the mission of PEF and women within the region. She never hesitated to start the region’s Women’s Committee and is committed to preserving the memory of our fallen sister, Judy Scanlon.”

**Darlene Williams**  
**Occupational Therapy Assistant 2, PEF Vice President**  
**OMH**

“Darlene is serving her first term as Vice President and second term as Contract Chair. The value of these two roles scream leadership. Our Vice President is a hardworking union sister, and she deserves all the accolades.”





Volunteers from SEIU affiliates around the country and the international union pose for a group shot in front of the rally stage on March 31.

## PEF lends a hand to SEIU Local 721 in Los Angeles

Solidarity. It's a word you hear often in the organized labor movement. And for good reason. The fight for a fair contract, good benefits and safe workplaces is a universal one. So when PEF President Wayne Spence was asked by the Public Services Division of SEIU to send a PEF team to Los Angeles to help SEIU Local 721 organize members for a march on city hall, he answered the call.

Region 2 coordinator Andrew Puleo, Council Leader Ron O'Bryan and PEF Communications Director Rob Merrill joined about 20 other SEIU affiliate members from around the country to help with the so-called "escalation event."

Local 721 represents 95,000 public sector employees in L.A. county, many of them with titles familiar to PEF members – from nurses and engineers to law enforcement and judges. Their contract with the county expired on March 31, 2022, and they are negotiating for a new three-year deal.

"Our message is simple: Respect us, protect us, pay us!" lead Local 721 organizer Gilda Alvarez told a tent-full of activists the day before the march. "Politicians love to thank us, but we're still understaffed, underpaid. Every day the county privatizes good union jobs. It hurts our communities and the people we serve."

Sound familiar?

The campaign resonated with President Spence because of its focus on privatization, one of the principle targets of PEF's ongoing "Fund Our Future" campaign.

"The push to privatize public jobs is definitely not limited to New York," said Spence. "Our fight is their fight and the more we can elevate our anti-privatization message, the



A marshal's view of the parade from behind as it heads into L.A.'s Financial District.

more politicians will hear it and the more likely we'll impact positive changes."

Puleo, O'Bryan and Merrill were put right to work after a day of cross-country travel. On day one they knocked on more than 30 doors in Long Beach, Calif., a working-class suburb about 10 miles outside downtown L.A. They successfully engaged with members about half of the time, leaving campaign literature on the doorstep of union members who weren't home.

According to the MiniVAN mobile canvassing app used by Local 721, from March 21-30, 2022, the full escalation team reached out to about 3,000 bargaining unit members either via direct door knocking or phone banking. Of those 3,000 contacts, about 600 were classified as "successful," meaning

an organizer was able to talk to the member. And of those 600, 200 of them agreed to participate in the March 31 rally, a 33% positive rate.

The morning of day two for Team PEF was spent at Local 721 headquarters on Wilshire Blvd., hearing from the union's statewide officers about their contract fight and helping build picket signs for the marchers. Local 721 President David Green provided the crowd of about 300 people with an update on the negotiations. The county's latest offer of "3, 3 and 3" – or 3% annual raises for three years – was immediately rejected by the union because it doesn't keep pace with the increased cost of living brought on by the pandemic.

"Three percent won't pay for the extra cost of gas it takes public workers to get to their jobs," said Green, noting for the out-of-staters in the audience that the price at L.A. pumps now exceeds \$6 per gallon. "We countered '3-3-3' with no number, but asked them to index the contract to inflation."

The afternoon of March 30 was devoted to one final round of phone banking, reconfirming attendance at the March 31 rally with members who already indicated they would attend either in a phone call or a digital Hustle.

March 31 dawned cool and overcast in L.A. as SEIU set up their stage and tents near Grand Park downtown. Buses began arriving about 9:30 in the morning and the street was soon filled with thousands of fired up members, ready to take to the streets. As a DJ blared high-energy tunes and members danced between speakers, they heard from Local 721 officers, as well as SEIU President Mary Kay Henry via video message and SEIU Executive Vice President Heather Conroy on stage.

Long-handled signs reading "Respect Us, Pay Us, Protect Us!" were handed out, and large banners were unfurled that read "Ready to Fight! Ready to Strike!" Some members agreed to wear backpacks that supported 10' tall vertical banners sporting the campaign's slogan, the better to be captured by the news helicopters and drones buzzing overhead. When the march stepped off at about 11:30, organizers estimated 3,000 members were in attendance, particularly impressive since it was a Thursday and they had to tap their own accruals if they were scheduled to work. Members made a 2-mile trek through downtown L.A., forcing authorities to temporarily close the L.A. Civic Center as the crowd walked by, and eventually finishing outside the County Board of Supervisors, which is the management party in their contract negotiations.

The rally and march concluded phase two of the escalation campaign, which will ramp up to phase three if no contract is reached. As of early April, the L.A. County Board of Supervisors requested additional time to seek authorization before submitting a counter proposal, surely a good sign in a long negotiation. California does not have a version of New York's Taylor Law, so unionized employees do have the right to strike. It was a word mentioned often by speakers at the rally. "We don't want to strike, but we're ready!" Local 721 President Green told the marchers.

PEF members who want to know how it all turns out can keep an eye on the [SEIU Local 721 website](#).



PEF Director of Communications Rob Merrill, PEF WNY Organizer Andrew Puleo, SEIU Local 721 President David Green and PEF Div. 357 Council Leader Ron O'Bryan

# Alice Hamilton: A pioneer in occupational health

By KATE MOSTACCIO

April 28 is Workers Memorial Day, a day when we honor those who died or were injured on the job. In the 19th century, workplace hazards were not really studied and many suffered death or life-long injury from exposure to unsafe materials.

One woman sought to change the narrative.

Dr. Alice Hamilton. Image via wikipedia.com

Dr. Alice Hamilton, the first woman appointed to the faculty at Harvard Medical School, was a pioneer in the field of occupational health, studying occupational illnesses, toxicology, and the dangerous effects of industrial metals and chemicals on the human body.

Born in 1869 in New York City, Hamilton received her doctor of medicine degree in 1893 from the Michigan Medical School, interned at Minneapolis Hospital for Women and the New England Hospital for Women and Children, and then traveled overseas to study bacteriology and pathology in Munich and Leipzig, Germany. She completed her postgraduate studies at Johns Hopkins University Medical School in Baltimore, Md.

"After accepting a teaching position at the Women's Medical School of Northwestern University in 1897, she moved into Jane Addams' Hull House in Chicago," according to the Centers for Disease Control's National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health website. "There she opened a well-baby clinic for poor families in the local settlement house neighborhood. As she acquainted herself with the families, she learned of their pains, strange deaths, lead palsy, 'wrist drop,' and of the high numbers of widowed women. Encouraged by the reformers of Hull House, she began to apply her medical knowledge to these social problems and thus began her scientific inquiry into occupational health for which she became known."

"Industrial medicine," concerned with illnesses caused by certain jobs, was uncharted territory in scientific circles until the Industrial Revolution of the late 19th century. Factories, especially textile mills; mining operations; the mercury industry; the match industry – all were new and safety precautions were few.



Dr. Alice Hamilton. Image via wikipedia.com

Some of Hamilton's best-known research highlighted phosphorus necrosis of the jaw, also known as "Phossy Jaw," and hatters suffering from mental illness as a result of mercury poisoning.

## Phossy Jaw

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the match industry used white phosphorous, and it soon became apparent the chemical was hurting workers.

"The women who worked in the factories would often work without proper safeguards, leading to exposure in the form of vapor," according to History Daily. "Workers soon began complaining of toothaches and swelling of the gums, which eventually led to abscesses and a greenish-white glow in affected bones. The condition also caused serious brain damage, with removal of effected tissue being the only option to prevent death."

Phossy jaw was horribly disfiguring and caused intense pain, enormous swelling in the face, and, in some cases, death. Some unfortunate victims lost their entire lower jawbones. In 1909, John Andrews investigated 15 match factories across the country and isolated 100 cases of the disease. Andrews led an unprecedented effort to lobby Congress to prohibit the use of white phosphorus in making matches. In 1912, it passed the Esch Act, which protected workers by placing a prohibitive tax on white phosphorus matches.

### Mercury Poisoning

The term "mad as a hatter" has its roots in occupational health and Lewis Carroll's "Alice in Wonderland" features the "Mad Hatter," a nod to the slurred speech, tremors, irritability, shyness, depression and other neurological symptoms that resulted from workplace exposure to mercury in the hat-making business.

"Society has made great progress in recognizing and controlling industrial hazards since Lewis Carroll's day," said John Howard, M.D., Director of the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) on the organization's website. "For example, nearly 70 years ago, on December 1, 1941, the U.S. Public Health Service ended mercury's use by hat manufacturers in 26 states through mutual agreements. The kinds of conditions that put hat-makers and other industrial workers at risk in 1865 are no longer tolerated.

"The Hatter remains a cautionary figure, since exposures to mercury and other hazardous industrial substances can still occur in the workplace," he said. "Symptoms from chronic exposures to mercury, lead, and other neurotoxic substances, even at low levels, may be subtle in early stages. Sometimes, they may be mistaken for symptoms that can arise from other causes. Similar concerns exist about other adverse effects that are associated with exposures on the job. It is important to be vigilant about work-related illness, and to act decisively to protect workers' health."

If you are concerned about a health issue at your New York State workplace, contact PEF's Health and Safety department at [HealthandSafety@pef.org](mailto:HealthandSafety@pef.org).



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# MBP Family Fun Days coming; Get your tickets now

By **SHERRY HALBROOK**

If you are sick of the cold and long for summer fun, the Membership Benefits Program (MBP) has just what you need.

“We are very happy to announce that MBP is offering three Family Fun Days this summer for PEF members and retirees to share with their family and friends at discounted prices,” said MBP Administrator Stephanie McLean-Beathley. “These events were super popular until they were interrupted by the pandemic. Last year, we were able to offer one Family Fun Day and we are delighted to get back to offering three again in 2022.”

#### **This year’s events will be:**

- July 9 at Six Flags Great Adventure Park in Jackson, N.J.;
- July 23 at Darien Lake in Darien Center, N.Y.; and
- August 6 at the Great Escape in Queensbury, N.Y.

The events will be held on the designated dates, rain or shine.

MBP will begin selling tickets for these events the first week of April on a first-come, first-served basis. It will provide information via email, the MBP newsletter and on Facebook. To get your tickets, go to [pefmbp.com](http://pefmbp.com) or call 518-785-1900, ext. 243.

“It’s our experience that these tickets will sell out fast, so don’t delay in reaching out to us,” McLean-Beathley said.

Tickets to these events are only \$20 per person and cover the price of entering the park, parking and water park admission. Your ticket also includes a buffet lunch that will be available from noon to 3 p.m. No ticket is needed for children ages 2 years and younger.

Because these events are so popular and the ticket price is so greatly reduced, you may attend only one of the three events. You may not split your tickets between two events. Each member or PEF retiree will be eligible to purchase up to six tickets to the event they choose and they must personally pick up their tickets (photo ID required) at the park on the day of the event by 2 p.m. Parking passes will be sent to the member or retiree in advance of the event.

Although MBP representatives will be at each of the Fun Day events until 3 p.m., your tickets are good for the whole day until the park closes.

If you want to attend the event at Darien Lake in western New York, but want to avoid a long commute to get there or return home on the day of the event, a variety of overnight lodging accommodations near the park are available including hotel rooms, cabins, RV hook-up sites and camping sites. The cost of lodging is not discounted by MBP and reservations would need to be made with the park independently by calling (585) 599-2211 Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.







## News You Can Use

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### **Contractual raises and performance awards**

Your paycheck is about to get a little bigger! Two percent contractual raises went into effect March 31 for Administrative payroll and April 7 for Institution payroll. Members in Administrative titles should see the raises in their April 27 paycheck; Institution titles should see the raise in their May 5 check.

PEF also negotiated an increase in five-year performance awards, from \$1,250 to \$1,500; an increase from \$2,500 to \$3,000 for 10-year awards; and a new 15-year payment of \$4,500 was added. Members should see the payments in their April 21 (Institution) and April 27 (Administrative) checks.

For complete details on the pay increases, [click here](#).

Direct any questions to your PEF field representative.

### **PEF negotiates extensions of temporary 2.5 times overtime rates**

Multiple agencies signed agreements to extend the 2.5 times overtime rate for certain titles.

The Office of Mental Health (OMH), the Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS), the Office for People with Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD), SUNY, and the Office

of Alcohol and Substance Abuse Services (OASAS) signed memorandums of agreement with PEF for the extensions.

For complete details on the extensions, including impacted titles, [click here](#).

### **Interested in a leadership role? April Special Elections are underway**

A number of Executive Board seats and the Region 2 Coordinator position are currently or soon-to-be vacant.

Help ensure you and your coworkers are represented on the second-highest decision-making body of the union, which meets quarterly, with members granted Employee Organizational Leave to gather in Albany for two days.

[Click here](#) for details on exactly which positions are open, nominating petition requirements and deadlines.

## Take advantage of PSWP training programs

### Business analysis for IT

PEF members can sign up for the Fundamentals of Business Analysis for IT Professionals workshop training, four sessions on April 27 and 28 and May 4 and 5.

Topics range from defining the scope for new projects, providing cost/benefit and risk analyses, and document business policies.

Register by April 20. For complete details, [click here](#).

### Legal, ethical considerations for clinicians

Take advantage of a workshop, Legal and Ethical Considerations in Working with High-Risk Clients, from noon to 1:30 p.m. May 4.

Topics range from the most important legal aspects clinicians confront in their practice, including record-keeping and documentation requirements and mandatory and recommended reporting.

Register by April 25. For complete details, [click here](#).

### Motivational interviewing

Members can participate in the virtual workshop, Motivational Interviewing: Empowering Clients and Inspiring Change, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. June 24.

The workshop focuses on motivational interviewing as a strength-based clinical approach designed to help clients find the motivation to make positive change.

Register by June 10. For complete details, [click here](#).

## SQL advanced workshop

Sign up today to participate in the Structured Query Language Advanced, workshop from 1 to 4 p.m. April 26 and 27 and from 1 to 4 p.m. May 11 and 12.

The workshop goes beyond the basics of SQL and assumes users have a basic understanding of statement structure and relational database concepts.

Register for April by April 19 and for May by May 4. For complete details, [click here](#).





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# Ailing members need your leave donations

The following PEF members have reported a need for leave donations due to the need for medical treatment or recuperation from illness or injury.

Donations are made from annual leave and donors must retain at least 10 days of annual leave after donating. To donate leave, obtain a leave-donation form from your personnel or human resources office and submit it to that office. You may donate leave to employees at both the agency where you work and to those working at other state agencies.

To help facilitate donations, we list an HR contact number for each person needing donations on the list below.

- **Diane Aleksandrowicz** is a nurse 2 at Rochester Psychiatric Center. Call 585-241-1900;
- **Matthew Cassidy** is a senior librarian at Woodbourne Correctional Facility in Woodbourne. Call 845-434-7730;
- **Deena Christian** is an offender rehabilitation coordinator at Greene Correctional Facility in West Coxsackie. Call 518-731-2741;
- **Carol Christiansen** is a teaching and research center nurse 2 at Upstate Medical Center in Syracuse. Call 315-464-4943;
- **Leanne Graf** is a teaching and research center nurse 2 at Upstate Medical Center in Syracuse. Call 315-464-4943;
- **Monica Kehagias-Gordon** is an intensive case manager at Buffalo Psychiatric Center. Call 716-816-2016;
- **Maria Lisanti** is an intensive case manager at Bronx Psychiatric Center. Call 718-931-0600;
- **Eddie Lorenzo** is a public health field services representative trainee 1 in Central Islip. Call 518-457-4272;
- **Sharon Lynch** is a parole officer in Jamaica Queens. Call 718-558-5226;
- **Kyle Tomlin** is a supervising offender rehabilitation coordinator at Ulster Correctional Facility in Napanoch. Call 845-647-1670; and
- **Karen Tully** is a senior attorney at the NYS Department of State in Albany. Call 518-474-2752.

The rules for making and receiving leave donations (such as leave recipients may not have had any disciplinary actions or unsatisfactory performance evaluations within their last three years of state employment) are set forth on pages 189 and 190 of the 2019-23 PS&T Contract. If you, or a PEF member you know, need leave donations because of a medical issue, you may contact The Communicator to request publication of that need. Send requests to [thecomunicator@pef.org](mailto:thecomunicator@pef.org), or call 518 396-8201. Be sure to provide your contact information.





# Letters to the Editor

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### **Wants PEF parole lobby day**

To the Editor: Why is PEF not having a lobby day for parole officers? This is outrageous that nothing has been done to stop Less Is More.

AMY CUMMISKY  
Hamburg

Editor's Note: PEF is constantly lobbying intensively (<https://communicator.pef.org/issue/volume-39-no-8/pef-was-a-strong-foe-of-less-is-more-legislation/>) to educate state leaders and the public about the serious problems related to Less is More. PEF Division 236 continues to lead the way in pushing for amendments to this harmful law and we will keep all members informed about future actions moving forward.

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### **When do we get our money?**

To the Editor: Do you know when PEF members will get longevity payments for 2022?

LEO ESTRELLA  
Gardiner

Editor's note: Checks with performance awards and advances will be dated April 21 for members on the state's Institution payroll and April 27 for those on the Administrative payroll. Coming paychecks will also include 2022 across-the-board raises. [See our story in this issue for details.](#)



## Watch out for scams, identity theft

Chances are, you or someone you know have received an ominous call or message from someone pretending to be from the government, alleging that your information has been compromised or demanding immediate payment. Ignore it.

This is just one of the tips the Social Security Administration Office of the Inspector General (SSA OIG) shared about scams during a national “Slam the Scam Day” in March.

The initiative, which began in 2020 to combat Social Security-related scams, is now expanding to include other government-imposter scams. These scams often involve someone claiming to be an SSA or other government employee who asks for personal information, demands payment, or makes threats. These scams are primarily carried out over the telephone, but perpetrators may also use email, text messages, social media, or U.S. mail.

According to the Federal Trade Commission (FTC), from January through September 2021, consumers lost more than \$331 million to government imposter scams.

SSA OIG urges everyone to be cautious of any contact supposedly from a government agency telling you about a problem you don't recognize. Real government officials will never:

- threaten arrest or legal action against you unless you immediately send money;
- promise to increase your benefits or resolve a problem if you pay a fee or move your money into a protected account;
- require payment with gift cards, prepaid debit cards, wire transfer, Internet currency, or by mailing cash;
- or try to gain your trust by providing fake “documentation,” false “evidence,” or the name of a real government official.

“The best ways to avoid falling prey to these types of scams are to hang up the phone or delete suspicious texts and emails without responding,” said Joseph Peters, Jr., secretary-treasurer of the Alliance for Retired Americans.

Report Social Security-related scams and fraud online at <https://oig.ssa.gov>.

Other government-imposter scams may be reported to the Federal Trade Commission at <https://www.ftc.gov/scams>.

Scams happen all the time so it is important for us to be informed to protect ourselves. Here is some more information about identity theft from the NYS attorney general.

Besides a general desire for personal privacy and to be “left alone,” there are very legitimate reasons why people act to decrease the personal information easily accessible about themselves.

The fastest growing financial crime in the nation — “identity theft” — is one important reason. Identity theft is when someone uses your personal identification information, such as your credit card number or Social Security number, to obtain something of value.

It takes very little to have your identity stolen. Only a few pieces of information can give a thief the ability to, for example, get a credit card in your name and leave you to deal with the bills.

If you believe someone has been using your name or personal information to make purchases, to get credit, or to obtain employment, you need to act right away to protect yourself..





**April 2, 2022**

Region 9 Leadership Retreat

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**April 2, 2022**

PEF psychologists learning at our Region 9 Leadership Conference.





**March 31, 2022**

In PEF Region 7, Division 242 Assistant Council Leader Joel Bartlett, right, presented a check to the Jamie Rose Foundation in honor of Jamie, a PEF member who worked at Sunmount OPWDD and whose murder in 2017 led to the drafting of legislation that would require care providers to report information in cases of domestic violence.

**March 30, 2022**

Stewards and leaders from Division 208 after distributing masks to members. From left to right: Lydia Velez, Brandt Hubbard, Region 5 Coordinator Dave Dubofsky, Amanda Ruland and Council Leader Angela Reh.



**March 21, 2022**

PEF Region 11 PAC Co-Chair Charles Roland with NYS Senator Jessica Ramos showing support for the Amazon workers' struggle to unionize on Staten Island





**March 15, 2022**

PEF Region 4 enjoying this years St. Patrick's Day Parade.

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**March 4, 2022**

PEF Region 7 Coordinator Barb Stransky, Field Rep Marty Blair and PEF Organizer Jess Carpenter showed appreciation today to the PEF Region 7 DOT-Watertown members with lunch and swag bags.

