



In hard times, heroes emerge.

Thank you, PEF heroes, for your work, your dedication and your continued commitment to PEF and the residents of New York state.

The
Communicator PEF

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The President's Message

By WAYNE SPENCE



PEF with you every step of the way through this crisis

I am so proud of each and every one of our 52,000 members. All of you are playing an important role in helping New York state fight the coronavirus pandemic and keeping New York state running during this emergency. Our union is unique because PEF members, working in nearly 4,000 different titles, touch every facet of society.

What we are facing is unprecedented and from day one PEF members have not only risen to the occasion, but have been on the forefront and the frontline in this crisis.

Your health and safety and that of your loved ones are our number one priority. We have been working 24/7 to ensure you have what you need to stay safe and to provide the quality services New Yorkers need now more than ever.

Our vigorous advocacy, including daily and often times late-night conversations with staff of the Governor's Office of Employee Relations (GOER) to make sure COVID-19 related policies are being implemented as imagined in state agencies, emails to commissioners on health and safety issues of our members and efforts to get personal protective equipment (PPE) where it is needed most.

We have been able to:

- negotiate an [emergency telecommuting plan](#);
- submit an "[Essential Duty Pay](#)" plan to the governor's office;
- negotiate a policy allowing members to wear their own protective masks in the workplace;
- [secured protective masks](#) for distribution to PEF members and medical masks for health care professionals;
- [secured blocks of hotel rooms for PEF nurses](#) around major medical centers in New York state including SUNY Stony Brook, SUNY Downstate and SUNY Upstate, and working on a plan to be able to continue this initiative for as long as needed;
- [call attention to the unfairness of delaying state paychecks](#) for the very workers that are putting their lives on the line for New York state;
- sent a [strong letter to the commissioner of the state Department of Health](#) (DOH) opposing a DOH plan to return suspected or confirmed COVID-19 staff back to work during staff shortages;
- [tracking new budget legislation and how it impacts PEF members](#);
- set up a web page on [pef.org](#) with [COVID-19 information](#), copies of letters sent to agency commissioners, and a comprehensive FAQ document that is updated DAILY with new information as soon as we receive it;
- held two [tele-town halls](#) where members could get questions to answers they have.

There is still much to be done. Please continue to reach out to your PEF field representative or local union leader with any questions and please let us know what you are facing at your worksite. We hear you and are vigorously advocating for your safety! We are in this fight together and together we will get through it.

Thank you, PEF heroes for your work, your dedication and your continued commitment to PEF and the residents of New York state.

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.

Sen. Schumer joins members on PEF COVID-19 tele-town hall

By **SHERRY HALBROOK**

PEF members who tuned in to the union's tele-town hall Thursday, April 9, had an opportunity to hear from their U.S. senator, Chuck Schumer, when he joined them on the call to update them on what Congress is doing to help them through this crisis.

PEF President Wayne Spence also brought several members working at key COVID-19-related sites throughout the state on to the call to speak about what they are experiencing. Secretary-Treasurer Kay Alison Wilkie, Vice Presidents Sharon V. DeSilva and Randi DiAntonio and key staff members were also on hand to update members on the latest news and address some of the most recent questions PEF members have been asking.

Spence began by outlining some of the many actions PEF has been taking to help members and he urged members to keep checking the [PEF website](#) to access the latest information on COVID-19-related issues and the FAQ the union posted providing answers to the questions members are asking. This information is being updated as fast as new information becomes available, which can be as often as several times in just one day.

Spence said he is in touch with the governor's office and commissioners at various agencies almost every day to raise issues, ask questions and try to get the answers and accommodations PEF members need, such as trying to get more members who are currently required to report to their worksites designated non-essential.

Wilkie reported that PEF Political Director Leah Gonzalez and Regional Director of Field Services Downstate Ricardo Cruz helped PEF obtain 50,000 medical/surgical masks and 3,000 N-95 masks and rush them to members who need them, but don't have them.

DiAntonio responded to a member's question about the possible closing of some state prisons. As PEF Political Action Committee chair, she reported that in spite of hard lobbying by PEF the state budget that passed allows the state to give only 90 days notice before closing a prison. But the Legislature did add budget language requiring the Department of Corrections and Community Supervision to report to the Legislature within 60 after such a closure on how the affected state employees were redeployed.

PEF General Counsel Renee Delgado said she has spoken with both officials at the state AFL-CIO and members of a prominent



law firm that specializes in Workers Compensation cases to get answers to questions about how to protect the rights of PEF members who develop COVID-19 because of workplace exposure.

"Document everything," she advised. Start documenting any possible exposures you have, when and where and how you have them, any symptoms you develop, test results and medical advice or treatment you receive, and how and when you are quarantined or ordered to self isolate. PEF has posted state Workers Compensation form C-3 on its website for you to download and file.

Delgado said the experience PEF and other union members had after 9/11 demonstrate how crucial it is to have documentation to support any claims you need to make regarding work-related injuries or illness.

"Please document it now," she emphasized.

In bringing Sen. Schumer onto the call, Spence said the senator was the first public official to call and congratulate him when he was first elected president in 2015. Schumer responded that PEF gave him his first big endorsement in his initial run for the Senate against the incumbent Alphonse D'Amato in 1997.

"You were there for me when I needed it and I will always be there for you," Schumer said.

He praised PEF members for maintaining their vital services to New Yorkers even at the possible risk to their own health and lives. "You are our heroes," Schumer said.

The Senate minority leader outlined the efforts that were made to get desperately needed financial support for individual Americans, small businesses, states, counties, health care institutions and their workers, as well as for big corporations and other large employers during this crisis. He talked about the importance of ensuring that New Yorkers and other Americans cannot be thrown out of their homes if they can't pay their rent or home mortgage because of being laid off or furloughed during this crisis.

Schumer also talked about the next round of aid that he is trying to negotiate now in the Senate. He wants to include a \$25,000 payment to workers who are staying on the job in spite of personal danger to meet the medical crisis and to keep food, medicine and essential services running. "Much of the PEF membership would be covered," if he is successful in negotiating this provision, Schumer said. "I'm with you all the way.

"New Yorkers are brave, strong, bold and resilient, and we will get through this," he added. "We will come back, stronger than ever."

Spence responded that about 75 percent of the PEF membership is deemed essential and is going in to work, instead of working from home, and he expressed the hope that the state and hospitals will use the federal aid to get the equipment and help that members need to save lives and be safe.

When Spence brought the succession of members on the line to talk about what they are experiencing, one word stood out in their comments: Crazy. Several members used it to describe how extreme and unprecedented and unimaginable conditions are where they are working.

Richard Fletcher is a disability analyst 3 at the state Office of Temporary and Disability Services in Binghamton. But that is not where he is working or what he is doing now. He volunteered to help and for the last three weeks he has been working at a drive-through COVID-19 testing site in Jones Beach State Park on Long Island.

"We are testing 800 to 1,000 people daily," Fletcher said. He and other state employee volunteers are working with members of the U.S. Army, Air Force and Marine Corps at the site.

A U.S. Army combat veteran, himself, Fletcher said his fellow state volunteers are making him proud. "They are the first ones here every morning, even before the Army gets here," he said.

Spence also reached out to Amy Pacholk, a teaching and research center nurse 2 at SUNY Stony Brook Medical Center on Long Island, who has been interviewed by both local and national news outlets about how they are holding up during this onslaught.

Pacholk said they just received about 20 medical staff from SUNY Upstate University Hospital in Syracuse earlier that day. Their help is greatly needed, she said, because Long Island has some of the highest levels of COVID-19 cases in the state and the entire country. It's a situation that means she's working an extra 24 to 36 hours of overtime in a two-week pay period.

"It's the craziest thing I've ever seen," she said of conditions in the hospital. "These patients are super ill and we deal with a lot of death. While most of the sickest patients have other serious illnesses (called co-morbidities) such as diabetes or heart disease, some, she said, appear to have none at all."

PEF nurses are exhausted, she said, and appreciate the hotel rooms PEF has made available for them so they don't need to go home and risk exposing their families to the virus. They are also grateful for the words and gestures from patients and the public who thank them for what they are doing.

"It's incredibly uplifting," Pacholk said.

John Buttino, a fire protection specialist 1 at the state Division of Homeland Security in Buffalo said he is one of those sent out to help with the COVID-19 response at more than a dozen sites.

Meanwhile, he said, about 15 percent of the state fire safety staff are quarantined because they have been exposed to the virus or are exhibiting symptoms associated with it.

Buttino thanked the union and its leaders for all they are doing to support the members and help them get through this crisis.

Nicholin McMillan, a TRC nurse 2 at SUNY Downstate Medical Center in Brooklyn (designated for COVID-19 patients only) said she had just worked from 7 p.m. Wednesday until 2 p.m. Thursday, although her shift was supposed to end at 8 a.m., and then the hospital wanted her to come in for another shift at 7 p.m.

"We are always short staffed," she said, "but I just can't do another shift now. I had to say no. I can't do it.

"It's crazy. Our patients are very, very sick," she said, and told of losing a new patient just a short time after she had checked his fever.

"We are consoling the patients, their families on the phone, and everyone. It's emotionally and physically draining," she said.

A link to a recording of the tele-town hall will be available on the PEF website.



Paycheck delay unfair to PEF members

**4/2/2020 –
THANKS TO PEF'S URGING AND PRESIDENT SPENCE'S
ADVOCACY, WE ARE GETTING WORD THIS MORNING
THAT FUNDS ARE BEING RELEASED FOR PAYCHECKS FOR
THE STATE WORKFORCE.**

ALBANY, NY (04/01/2020) (readMedia)– The failure to pass a state budget by a March 30th payroll deadline left members of the New York State Public Employees Federation (PEF), many of whom are on the frontlines of coronavirus response efforts, facing a possible delay in receipt of their paychecks. “Our members should not be pawns in this budget fight,” said PEF President Wayne Spence at a press conference on the steps of the State Capitol Wednesday. “It is unfair for PEF members to be stuck in the middle as elected officials spar over whose fault it is that paychecks were not issued on payday. PEF members were not a day late showing up for the COVID-19 emergency. Their paychecks shouldn't be late either.”

With 52,000 members in 4,000 titles, PEF's membership includes countless essential staff combating the coronavirus at state hospitals and prisons; employees at the Department of Labor who are working tirelessly to process an avalanche of unemployment claims; and thousands of other state employees working from home.

“Our members are making sacrifices to keep New York state running,” Spence said. “We've been fighting for adequate personal protective equipment, for telecommuting and for many other safeguards our members need to keep themselves and their families safe during this pandemic. We have been literally begging the state, our employer, for the protections we need. PEF members are essential workers in dangerous conditions and shouldn't have to beg for what is needed to keep themselves and their families safe.” Spence added, “It only adds insult to injury that they can't get a paycheck.”

View Online: <http://readme.readmedia.com/Paycheck-delay-unfair-to-PEF-members/16997279>



Wayne Spence, PEF President speaking to reporters at the steps of the Capitol



<https://vimeo.com/402999809>

Wayne Spence, PEF President on New Channel 13 – Budget talks leave some state employee paychecks in limbo



<https://wnyt.com/albany-new-york-news/budget-talks-and-paychecks-for-some-new-york-state-employees/5689406/>

PEF RNs striving to save patients and themselves

By **SHERRY HALBROOK**

Comparing the fight against COVID-19 to an all-out shooting war with mass casualties is not an exaggeration. PEF nurses, doctors, EMTs and other medical professionals are the among the brave “troops” fighting this battle with too little ammunition, vastly outnumbered by the enemy and often missing protective gear they may need to survive the enemy attacks.

Their “MASH” unit is actually the heart of the battle, and they are all too vulnerable to becoming the casualties themselves.

“We love our jobs and we want to do our jobs, but please give us what we need to do our jobs safely!” begged a nurse and PEF leader working at a COVID-19 designated hospital where the battle between life and death is playing out over and over again on every shift, day and night.

PEF has been working to find ways to support and help its members on the front lines, working with friends and contacts in the New York City mayor’s office and others to speed the delivery of desperately needed supplies.

PEF Political Director Leah Gonzalez said she spoke with the deputy mayor March 29 about getting more supplies for SUNY Downstate Medical Center in Brooklyn that is among the hospitals designated to handle only COVID-19 patients. She was assured that 15,000 N95 respirator masks, 44,000 surgical masks 20 ventilators were sent to Downstate the previous day.

“We want to do everything we can to help our members in their struggle to save lives, and to be safe doing it,” said PEF President Wayne Spence. “We have worked hard to build

relationships with elected leaders and others in the city as well as in Albany and now is when those contacts are indispensable.”

Members working in the hospitals have no time to look at what happens behind the scenes.

Overrun with patients, every bed full on every unit, more than 50 patients in the emergency department waiting for beds on the floors, the medical staff is struggling much as it would in a war zone field hospital.

Feelings of isolation, desperation and fear of death closing in around you are inescapable.

“When we begin a shift, we nurses huddle together and pray. We are afraid and we wonder when we will get sick,” the nurse said. “Our patients are alone and scared and need someone to talk to, their families call and they are afraid and they need reassurance, our co-workers are scared and sometimes they are crying, we are scared and our families are scared. We are trying to support each other and everyone else and it doesn’t stop.

“These patients are really, really sick. We have so many patients

needing oxygen all the time that our hospital oxygen system is overwhelmed. Alarms are going off in every room, sometimes for two hours. Our jobs are 10 times harder than usual.

“The patients just keep dying and dying in front of us. After so many, we are getting numb to it. And that is terrible.



"I'm supposed to care for six of the patients on the unit, but we often just have two nurses to care for them all. No one goes home when their 13-hour shift ends. I often stay another three or four hours. The state is offering to pay \$100 per hour to nurses who come out of retirement or come here from other places to work temporarily, but when they see what it's like they want to go home. They don't want to stay."



"We are getting no extra pay incentive. We feel like we were dodging bullets and now we're dodging bombs. We feel like we are sacrificing our lives! We are not immune. The virus does not discriminate."

"At least we are all trying to support each other through this. The doctors and everyone here is so kind. I've never seen our entire staff so bonded like this before."

"When I go home, I immediately take off my clothes and shower and wash my hair and then I steam my face and nostrils for a long time. I have a child who needs to be close to me, but I have to stay away from him to try to keep him safe," the nurse said. "Someone has to watch him when I'm at work, but he needs me."

PEF has secured hotel rooms for its members near the hardest hit COVID-19 hospitals so that nurses and other nurses working there can take a room to rest in nearby if they are afraid to risk exposing family members at home or are just too exhausted to make the commute.

Nurses at the hospital are continually running out of the supplies they need to stay safe and to monitor and treat their patients the nurse said. They are constantly running out of things as basic as alcohol pads, gowns and thermometers, the nurse said. "Nurses are given one glove to last all day. If JACO saw that, it would go crazy!" (JACO is the hospital accreditation group called The Joint Commission.)

PEF Nurses Coordinator Doris Dodson said she has heard from many nurses who are very stressed because they lack the supplies they need and are being told to cut corners that would normally cause them to be disciplined or even fired.

"As nurses, we were all trained in infection control protocols to

prevent the spread of infections," Dodson said. "Now they are being told to do things, such as reusing a mask, which would have been the subject of discipline. We were taught to take it off and throw it in a bag after seeing one patient and put on a fresh one before you see the next patient. Now nurses may be directed to use one mask for their entire shift."

PEF nurses say they are still running short of what they need and are forced to ration what they have. The need for supplies races forward, and as fast as they catch up on one thing, others come up short.

The nurse is still calling for more help.

"We are pleading: Give us what we need now! We just want to do our jobs and do them safely."





Stony Brook, Downstate members thankful for hotel room amid coronavirus pandemic

By KATE MOSTACCIO

PEF members on the front lines of the coronavirus pandemic at SUNY Downstate and Stony Brook University Hospital have direct contact with infected patients and have been fearful returning home to their loved ones and possibly passing on the virus.

That's why PEF staff jumped to the challenge and secured blocks of rooms at hotels near the hospitals for the members to use instead.

"The option of having a place to sleep and clean up after work to relieve the anxiety and stress of going home to our loved ones is a huge burden lifted," said one nurse from Stony Brook, who wished to remain anonymous. "Before this, I was stripping down outside my home to just run in and shower. Still feeling like I am exposing my family along the way. This allows me to at least have one less stress at work while caring for these very sick patients."

She praised hotel staff and urged fellow health care workers at Stony Brook to make use of the rooms.

"The hotel staff has been great," she said. "The rooms are clean and have what we need to get a shower and sleep. I highly recommend that others who feel the same way utilize this wonderful opportunity to decrease the stress they have to deal with on a daily basis.

"We appreciate all PEF is doing for us in that regard," she said. Another Stony Brook nurse said the feeling of safety is important.



"I am happy to say how safe I feel living at the hotel in order to prevent the exposure to my family," said Kimberly Conlon. "The hotel has been great so far and the staff very nice and welcoming. It is very convenient to stay at a hotel very near to work especially after long shifts where you are not always getting out on time."

Their sentiments were shared by a fellow PEF nurse at SUNY Downstate.

"Having PEF provide a safe and clean haven to destress and decompress is comforting," the nurse said. "It also alleviates fears my family has of me coming straight home from direct contact with COVID-19 patients."

The nurse said the situation at Downstate, and other hospitals treating COVID-19 patients, is unimaginable.

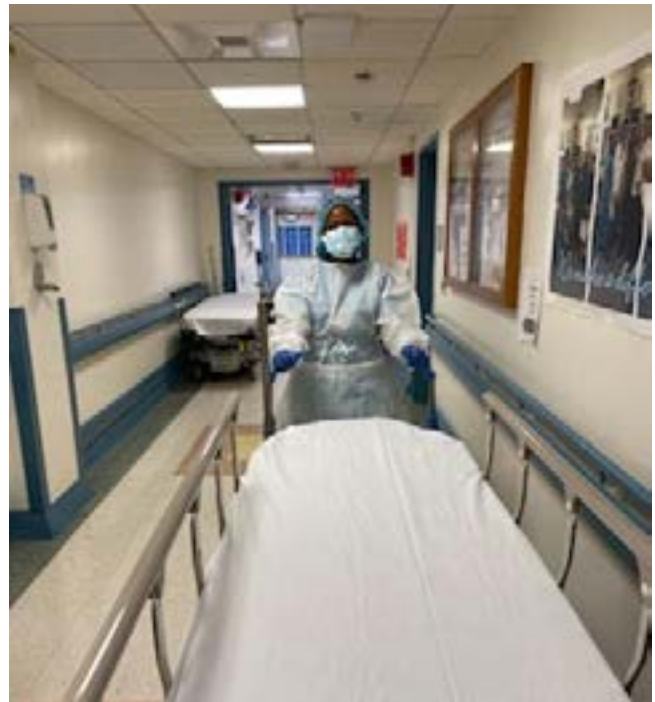
"The emotional toll I have working 12 hours straight in the MICU and witnessing and caring first hand for the critically ill patients with COVID-19 is indescribable," she said. "In my mind is the difficulty of doing my best with a virus I can't see, hear, taste or feel is a mind-blowing experience, as well as having to talk to the emotionally distressed family members via phone about their loved ones who can't see and can't be with their loved ones at the bedside.

"All while I fear coming home to my family as a possible carrier or sick," she said. At home, this PEF nurse has a spouse, two children and elderly parents with Alzheimer's Disease.

She express appreciation and gratitude for the recognition of what nurses on the front line are experiencing.

"Hampton Inn has been gracious to offer their hospitality and I am so thankful," she said. "Way to go PEF."

Another SUNY Downstate nurse had been considering hotel rooms on her own.



"I had discussed with my husband a few weeks back when the hospital started getting multiple COVID positive patients that I may need to stay away from home," she told PEF. "My one and only daughter is asthmatic and she was really high risk. But as soon as numbers started going up I started looking for hotels and they were charging a lot."

PEF's intervention was appreciated.

"Thankfully PEF came through," she said. "I cannot thank PEF enough for coming through for their members. These are difficult times for everyone and I truly appreciate getting a comfortable room. The staff at the hotel are great and very accommodating. I have until April 7 and I hope I can continue to keep my distance from the family as much as possible."

As of April 7, more than 70 PEF nurses were taking advantage of available hotel rooms, including 47 members from Stony Brook University Hospital; 18 members from SUNY Downstate Medical Center; 12 from Pilgrim Psychiatric Center; and one each from Rockland Psychiatric Center and Upstate University Hospital.



Rescuing New Yorkers, one laid-off worker at a time

By **SHERRY HALBROOK**

These days when we hear the word surge we think of the rapidly increasing number of COVID-19 cases and the huge risk and challenge it is bringing to our health care professionals.

But there is entirely different group of PEF professionals who are experiencing a related surge in their workload and they are the state Labor Department employees striving to keep up with a tsunami of unemployment insurance claims coming from all of the employees who have suddenly lost their jobs as their employers are ordered to shut down to drastically reduce social contacts that can spread COVID-19.

"These employees at the DOL are unsung heroes," said PEF President Wayne Spence.

"We all know that every public employee is sacrificing and experiencing hardship and exceptional challenges during this crisis. And our nurses and medical professionals are saving lives and earning our highest possible respect and gratitude" Spence said. "But our members processing these unemployment claims are connecting frightened, desperate New Yorkers to economic life support and no one knows how hard it is or the heroic way they are rising to this urgent challenge."

The PEF members handling the claims throughout the state have gone from a five-day workweek to a seven-day workweek, and from working seven hour days to putting in more than 11 hours on five of those days. It's exhausting and very inconvenient for workers with dependent family members or pets who need their care and attention.

"I'm very proud of my co-workers," said PEF Executive Board member Helen Esposito, a labor services representative at the DOL in Binghamton. They are volunteering to work paid overtime and Saturdays and Sundays. At this point the hours are 8 a.m. to 7:30 p.m. Monday through Thursday, and Friday 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Saturday is 7:30 a.m. to 8 p.m. And it's 7:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Sunday. With Sundays devoted to trying to catch up.

"We are trying to get cases processed as fast as possible," Esposito said.

PEF Division 281 Council Leader Cathy Okenica and her husband are supervising labor services representatives who also work in the DOL call center in Binghamton. They are still working in their office. They have other family members who work at the center. And that means they are all working the same long hours and no one has the chance to shop for groceries or take care of other personal issues.

"We're all in the same boat," Okenica said. "There is no 'later.' By the time we get out of work the stores are closed or they are out of the necessities we need. We have no home life."

"We are sacrificing, all of us, with one single goal: to get people to survive this crisis," Okenica continued. "We see that the people who had the lowest incomes and fewest resources were the first to lose their jobs. We're doing all we can to help them."

Esposito said she lacks the necessary technology to work from home, so she comes in to work in her cubby that is part of many in a very large open room.

"When we sit in our cubbies we are more than 6 ft. apart, but if we stand at the opening to our cubby we are less than 6 ft. apart," she said. She finds it worrying that the building's air handling system recycles the air, and it might spread the virus.

The employees don't take the unemployment applications face-to-face with the public. They are handled over the phone or online. And all of the career centers are closed for now.

"New Yorkers are so happy to hear a human voice come on the line! They might be tough to deal with at other times, but now they are so sweet and happy to have us there to help them," Esposito said.



And the applicants are even happier to hear that the waiting period for receiving benefits is waived during the crisis. And the required in-office visits to be sure they are looking for work are also being waived for now.

Nevertheless, the workload is heavy and “It’s mentally exhausting,” Esposito said.

It can be very demoralizing Okenica said, when you encounter an angry email from a panicky applicant who has suddenly lost their job through no fault of their own.

Esposito and Okenica said they worked through the chaos and desperation of 9/11, Hurricane Sandy and the “great recession” that began in 2008, but this current crisis tops them all.

“Nothing could prepare anybody for this,” Okenica said.

Even their new computer system is sometimes crashing under the workload.

Spence has been in touch with the state labor commissioner to look for ways to ease the burden. The agency has been hiring more staff and inviting some recently retired staff to return to work until the workload shifts back to normal.

When it comes to exposure from dealing directly with the public, “The person I worry about most is our security guard. He isn’t a PEF member or even a state employee, but he has to block people from trying to come into our office here in Flushing,” said Executive Board member Scarlett Ahmed.

Ahmed is the PEF labor-management chair at the DOL, but she does not work in unemployment claims. She said there was some initial confusion over who is considered essential and who is nonessential and if they need to work from home.

“Many people don’t have the technology to work from home,” Ahmed said. “Child care is also an issue since schools have closed.

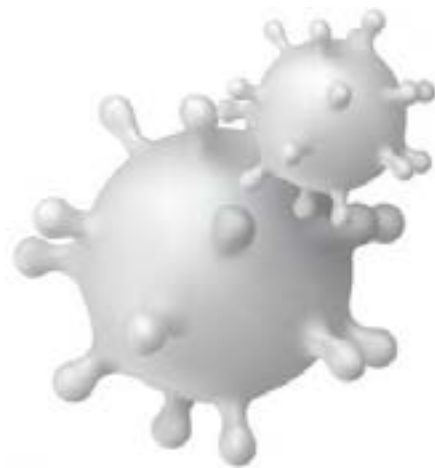
“We’re doing the best we can with the hand we were dealt,” Esposito said.

But these members are getting through this because all of the DOL employees and managers are united and mutually supportive in their determination to meet the challenge.

“Our managers are with us all day every day. They are working the same long hours and coming in to work the weekends,” Okenica said. “The people here care about each other. We are family, whether we are related or not.

“We’re not nurses or doctors, but that doesn’t mean we’re a lesser priority.”

Esposito put it this way: “We can’t change this, but I’m not going to let the virus control me or control my life.”



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Stepping up for PEF members during COVID-19 crisis

By KATE MOSTACCIO

The 2019 novel coronavirus (COVID-19) is spreading fast, popping up in new counties near daily. Gov. Andrew Cuomo has implemented measures to slow the virus, putting New York on “pause” and banning dine-in at restaurants and bars, prohibiting gatherings, directing schools to close, and requiring non-essential employees to work from home, when possible.



The list of measures continues to grow. Please continue to visit <http://www.pef.org/covid-19> for updates.

Recognizing the need for social distancing, PEF staff worked fast to negotiate a temporary emergency telecommuting agreement with the Governor’s Office of Employee Relations, taking care to make sure that PEF members are protected under the agreement.

“Although this is an emergency situation, we must proceed with a guarded mind to protect the integrity of the PEF contract and make sure our membership is shielded from interpretive managers,” PEF President Wayne Spence said. “Though this emergency agreement is not everything we were looking for, under the circumstances and time constraints, we were able to get some important wins for our members. For example, in spite of the state standing strong on home visits, after days of sometimes hard negotiations, we were able to have that section removed, which was very important.”

The statewide agreement is currently valid for 60 days. It can be extended by mutual agreement of PEF and the state. Download the application [here](#).

Under the PS&T contract, telecommuting is limited to four days a pay period – this agreement allows members considered non-essential to telecommute for five days a week.

All agencies have discretion over who can telecommute. PEF negotiated an appeals process into the agreement. PEF also sought to include preparation for telecommuting to streamline the process and safeguard members.

“We made sure to include protections for our members by negotiating built-in appeal processes for both mandatory and voluntary portions of the temporary agreement,” Spence said. “We asked for and received a training, which occurs prior to the actual telecommuting. This is another step that protects our members.”

Who Is “non-essential”?

Telecommuting isn’t possible for all PEF members. Front-line health care workers, parole officers, members at the Department of Labor processing unprecedented numbers of unemployment applications, and fire protection specialists, to name a few, can’t work from home.

The Governor’s Office defines essential/non-essential as follows:

“Essential employees are defined as anyone whose job function is essential to the effective operation of their agency or authority, or who must be physically present to perform their job, or who is involved in the COVID-19 emergency response. Non-essential employees are defined as anyone who does not need to be physically present to perform job functions, or they are not required to meet the core function and programs of their agency during this emergency response.”



PEF staff has put together a Q&A with more information for members. You can access that [here](#).

Essential state workers are working tirelessly to keep services moving and New Yorkers safe. By limiting non-essential workers in the workplace, PEF members are doing their part to slow the spread of COVID-19 and protect themselves, their families, their coworkers and the patrons of their agencies.

In case of quarantine, pay is covered

The Legislature and Governor enacted [emergency programs to provide paid leave to workers impacted by COVID-19](#) closures and isolation and quarantine orders.

Under this legislation, PEF members facing mandatory or precautionary governmental quarantine or isolation would receive paid leave during their quarantine or isolation regardless of whether they have a diagnosis for a period of 14 days.

Accruals can not be docked for this purpose.

Workers throughout the state in other industries would also receive varying levels of pay, depending on the number of employees in their organization and the net income of

the business.

OPWDD agrees to halt programming

After concerns were raised by PEF members at the Office for People With Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD), PEF moved quickly to advocate for proactive changes at the agency to protect members and their clients.

OPWDD agreed to suspend day programs, restrict outings, limit IRA visits to medically and clinically essential services and temporarily suspend face-to-face New Employee Orientation/Promote Training classes and refreshers.

"PEF leaders around the state have been relaying member concerns from the field to us on a daily basis and we are diligently working to get the state and agency leadership to see that what they are doing and asking of our members is unsafe and does not conform to CDC and DOH practices put in place to stop the spread of the virus," President Spence said. "We will continue to make it loud and clear that some of the agency practices are unsafe and unfair to our members and their families, as well as the individuals you serve."

Parole in-person visits suspended

As efforts ramped up to accommodate social distancing in workplaces, PEF worked with the Department of Corrections and Community Supervision to protect parole officers and staff, as well as parolees and their families, from the spread of COVID-19.

"After days of intense talks, the state has agreed to suspend in-person parolee visits during the coronavirus emergency," Spence said. "For some of us the decision may have come too late, we are getting word that some parole officers have tested positive for the coronavirus. However, without our intervention we believe this practice would have continued.

"After many days of talks, we were able to get the state to see that what they were asking of our parole members was unsafe, did not conform with practices put in place to stop the spread of the virus and was unfair to our members and their families," Spence said.

The memo sent by DOCCS says supervision will continue via telephone calls, text messages, videoconferencing, GPS monitoring and other methods.

"Armed with the facts from your experiences in the field, we were able to advocate and help secure changes, but we know there's much more that needs to be done," President Spence said. "We continue to stress the importance of reducing the number of 'essential' staff to only those directly related to health and safety, maximizing telecommuting and tele-health, ensuring timely notifications of potential exposure and

providing PPE to those providing medical care.

"Please continue to communicate your concerns and ideas and your PEF leaders at all levels will continue to advocate for your safety and well-being," Spence said. "We are truly stronger together!"

Opt for direct deposit

With upheaval and uncertainty across the state, a paycheck delay could be particularly difficult for families coping with extraordinary situations.

PEF members are urged to consider enrolling in the direct-deposit payroll method.

State employees can enroll in direct-deposit at any time. It is recommended that PEF members reach out to their agency or facility HR department for additional information and how to enroll.

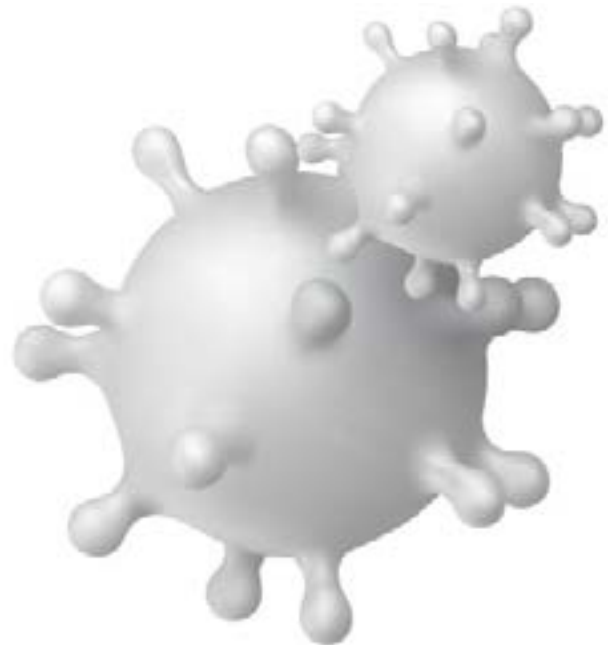
PEF delegate petitioning schedule

Recognizing the constraints facing members due to COVID-19, PEF has updated the PEF Delegate petitioning schedule.

As of now, petitions will be available May 13. Petitions will be due June 4.

For contested seats only, ballots will be mailed June 19. Ballots will be due July 13. Ballot counts will commence July 15.

This schedule is tentative and subject to change. Please continue to visit <http://www.pef.org/covid-19> for updates.





'PEF Does It' during coronavirus pandemic

By KATE MOSTACCIO

The state may be on "pause" but PEF members across New York continue to provide services and step outside the norm to assist with coronavirus response.

Labor and Delivery Ward

News outlets have touched on the issue of birthing mothers being unable to bring their planned support people to the delivery room due to coronavirus concerns. A PEF labor and delivery nurse at Upstate University Hospital said it's very difficult both for the mothers and the nurses caring for them. "We're seeing a whole different level of anxiety," she said. "A lot of our population is anxious anyway, they don't know what to expect, some are doing it for the first time. There is an underlying sense of being out of control. Some people when they go into birth they really want things a certain way – there is no way we can do some of the things they want now. They want family, to walk in the halls, to labor in the tub, or even use nitrous."

The nurse, who has worked in labor support for 36 years and has been a nurse since 1993, said the situation is stressful all around.

"They come in and the father knows if he leaves the building they may not let him back in," she said. "Moms know they can't have their mother or a sister with them. It's really the significant other and the mom. They're going down this road they've never traveled before and they have no idea what to expect and they are alone."

The PEF nurse said some nurses are hesitant to be in the room and be at their side.

"They don't know where they've been," she said. "There is tension between the nurse and the patient. Are you really feeling ok, have you really not been exposed?" As a hands-on person, the nurse said it has been especially difficult for her.

"I know how important it is to the birthing process making someone comfortable," she said. "When you are in that situation with a mom, you become their best friend or sister in a matter of minutes. They look for your facial expressions, now completely hidden. Or for your touch."

Precautions are being taken to limit the amount of interaction the nurses can have with the mothers for the protection of both.

"We are wearing masks at all times," she said. "When you come in, your temperature is taken and you are asked questions at the door. You have to have that mask on the entire time. If you are alone you can take off the mask and eat. "When you are doing patient care, you are wearing masks, gloves, gowns and head covering like a scrub hat. If you have any fluids splash on you during delivery they are not sure of the impact of bodily fluids yet. We are being extra cautious. If we go in to the OR we are wearing a regular surgical mask plus an n95."

The nurse said mothers are so scared of possible infection that there has been an increase in calls about home births.

"That opens a whole other can of worms," she said.

"Realistically things may go OK at home but labor and delivery is kind of like a mini intensive care unit. Women and babies can go bad so quickly. We have midwives that are being inundated with calls for home delivery. We're telling people it's not a safe situation for you to stay home. We are doing everything we can to take care of you here."

Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation

Gov. Andrew Cuomo, advocating social distancing to slow the spread of the virus, urged New Yorkers to visit state parks and enjoy the open spaces.



"The New York state parks are places of respite where the people of the state may access Mother Nature's healing powers," said Division 305 Council Leader Elizabeth Martin, a senior architect with the Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OHRHP). "There's nothing like walking in the woods or by the beach or across a meadow to remember we have each other and a very beautiful planet to be thankful for."

OPRHP members are stepping outside their usual duties assisting with COVID-19 testing sites at Jones Beach and Anthony Wayne Recreation Area; hosting an Incident Management Team for COVID-19 testing at Saratoga Spa; volunteering and training to staff the State Emergency Operations Center and Regional Operations Centers; driving supplies, including virus tests, water, and hand sanitizer, to sites in need; and more, according to a letter to employees from OPRHP Commissioner Erik Kulleseid.

Staff deemed non-essential and asked to work from home have collaborated with members from the state Office for Information Technology Services to set up and keep doing the work of the agency.

"Like many agencies, we are working remotely as best we can," Martin said. "Because we have a construction mandate, many in our Capital unit are working with contractors at various parks/sites to keep the projects moving forward. They are following appropriate protocol for social distancing, if attending meetings."

Martin said OPRHP members are rising to the challenges presented by this unprecedented time.

"This time away from colleagues has put into sharp perspective how much we depend on each other's energy, insight, creativity and encouragement on a daily basis," she said.

Workers Compensation Board

Administrative law judges at the Workers Compensation Board adjudicate workers compensation claims, determining entitlement to indemnity benefits and medical treatments. These PEF members have been working daily to continue holding hearings for claimants during the COVID-19 shutdown.

"They continue to have a need to have their benefits maintained," one member said. "If the parties have an issue, somebody has to decide whether it's appropriate to continue benefits or whether to authorize medical benefits. Authorizations for medical treatment and sometimes wage replacement aren't allowed until a judge says that it is. They have to have hearings."

With mandatory social distancing, the Workers Compensation

Board has moved to 100 percent virtual hearings – something the PEF member said the agency was well positioned to do. "We've been given very good guidance by our bosses as to how to continue having hearings," he said. "Injured workers can appear by video or by telephone. If they don't have the technical know how to connect through their laptop video, we will call them."

"Virtual hearings went 100 percent into place about a year ago," he said. "We are uniquely and ideally suited to be continuing with hearings."

Depending on office location, some judges are working from home and some from the office.

"We can come in but it depends on where the office is," the member said. "We are very much socially distanced here. We never have to be within six feet of anybody. Our waiting room is closed entirely."

All in all, virtual hearings have been going well so far, the member said.

"It has gone quite smoothly. Sometimes there are connectivity issues but for the most part it's very rare that those problems last the entire day," the member said. "We really were in a great position to be able to do this. But it is a lot of work. Hearings have been going later. You have to make a commitment of more time."

"I hope they [the state] appreciate they have a workforce that gets the job done," he said.

New York State Fire

PEF members from Division 179 in the Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Services are hard at work in all corners of New York state supporting COVID-19 efforts.

From correctional facilities, to working with EMS crews, to logistical support for testing sites, fire protection specialists are performing essential services daily.

"We're supporting operations for the NY Clean project, which is providing hand sanitizer at correctional facilities," said Fire Protection Specialist and Council Leader John Buttino. "We have worked with three correctional facilities who have received the hand sanitizer. The alcohol content presents significant fire risk, so our members conduct



inspections, check for code compliance and train the fire brigades."

Members are assisting with many hospital and drive-through testing operations.

"We are providing fire safety support at the Javits Center and all outreach hospitals," Buttino said. "Our members are providing support and decontamination for nurses at all testing sites."

In New York City, State Fire members are helping with EMS response.

"In the city, we have an ambulance coordination system with outside agencies that we're working on with Department of Health's Bureau of EMS," Buttino said. If the need arose for evacuations from facilities, like nursing homes, this cooperative effort would be at the ready to assist and safeguard patients and workers.

State Fire members are deployed in hot zones and at sites where COVID-19 is undoubtedly present but Buttino said they are taking all possible precautions to remain safe.

"We have an agency safety officer that contacts each site and ensures that needs are met and protections are in place," Buttino said. "We decontaminate all equipment before each use. We have had up to 30 members quarantined and few tested positive."

Buttino is grateful for PEF's involvement and support. "The support from PEF has been significant," he said. "It's been a tremendous support to have [PEF President] Wayne [Spence] and his staff in touch with us and in frequent contact."

Department of Transportation

Bridge and road projects continue during the state's shutdown thanks to PEF members working under unfamiliar conditions in their own homes, many for the first time. Lynn Godek, a landscape architect with DOT, does design work on capital programs, such as repairing highways, bridges and culverts in the state highway system.

"As a landscape architect, my contribution to the plans have to do with things from ground cover, soil, trees, aesthetics, streetscapes," Godek said. "I also look at sidewalk compliance with accessibility regulations for ADA, cultural resource screening, and environmental screening for every project."

Most of her department, tasked with design projects, are considered nonessential and were directed to work from home. Godek said the bridge inspectors are an exception. "In our design group we have bridge inspection. They're

considered essential," she said. "Some of them are working from home but are on call. If something were to happen to a bridge they would have to be called out to go and look at it and inspect it and decide if the bridge needs to be closed."

Members at DOT are also involved in planning, construction, maintenance and operations.

"A lot of maintenance and operations staff are considered essential to take care of day-to-day maintenance of our highways," Godek said.

Working from home hasn't been bad but there were a few hiccups.

"We tested out our ability to work remotely," Godek said. "I have had email remote access for a long time. Remote access desktop had a lot of hiccups. On Tuesday, we were told to stay home. By Thursday, I could get full access."

PEF members like Godek and her DOT coworkers are dedicated to New Yorkers.

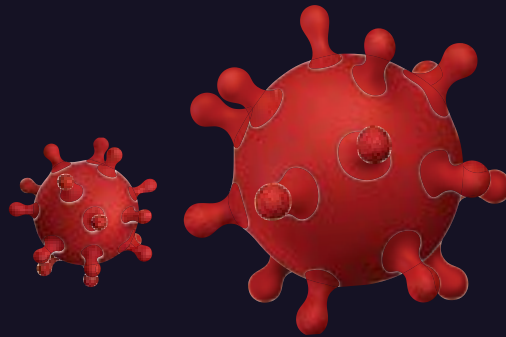
"I'm aware of a lot of perceptions people have about governments. That we're working on their back and their dollar. I don't take that lightly," Godek said. "I think of their perspective and seeing all state workers being told to stay home and thinking, 'Hey I still have to go to work.'"

"I am grateful for this job that I have," she said. "The whole reason I'm doing this is because we are civil servants for the people of New York. Even if my role isn't deemed essential, I'm still working for the people of New York. I wouldn't feel right just sitting back. I'm doing my job to the best of my ability."

Godek is thankful for the emergency telecommuting policy and hopes it will lead to more flexibility in the future.

"This shows we can do this," she said. "We can telecommute. It should be an option for our employees. I think this is a great option to have in our toolbox as state employees."





COVID-19: PEF Q&A

PEF Members should contact their Division's local leaders with any concerns to ensure that workplace issues are being presented to management at local labor/management meetings. These meetings can and should be ongoing and may be conducted via tele-conferencing.

This is an update to the FAQs that were originally distributed on March 18, 2020, which have been updated regularly since that date. It is intended to help guide you through the ongoing and evolving public health emergency caused by the COVID-19 Virus.

Since the last update to this FAQ, guidance and regulations have been issued by the U.S. Department of Labor regarding the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA). More detailed information about the FFCRA can be found [here](#) (link to our FFCRA Advisory).

This FAQ will continue to be updated as needed.

[Click here for PEF Q&A](#)



PEF retiree brings music to Brooklyn neighbors during COVID-19 isolation

By KATE MOSTACCIO

The sounds of an accordion drew neighbors to their windows and stoops recently as PEF retiree Paul Stein donned a hardhat, asking people to “Stay 6 Feet Away,” and gave an “Emergency Accordion Extravaganza” concert from his brownstone stoop in Brooklyn.

Stein was a longtime Council Leader of Division 199, working for the state Department of Health in New York City and at the New York State Veterans Home in St. Albans. As associate counsel in the Division of Legal Affairs’ Bureau of Professional Medical Conduct, he spent his state career prosecuting medical misconduct.

The accordion has been Stein’s instrument of choice since he was 8 years old.

“I started playing at school assemblies in the third grade,” he recalled. “I picked the accordion because of the Lawrence Welk show. During the 1940s and 50s, the accordion was so prevalent around the country. Music schools after school taught the accordion.

“The accordion was known as a happy instrument,” he said. “I think that’s one of the reasons I took to it. It suited my personality. You can play by yourself and be a self-

contained band. Until 9 years ago, I wasn’t in any band or orchestra, I was always a single.”

The upbeat, happy sounds of the accordion not only suit Stein’s personality but also his ethnicity.

“I’m Jewish and the accordion is very good for Jewish music,” he said. “I sing in English, Yiddish and in Hebrew.”

Playing for a cause is nothing new for Stein.

“Since the 1980s I have been playing for community events and for political demonstrations and marches,” he said. “I have played at Thanksgiving and Christmas dinners at community centers. Played for tens of thousands of people over the years during dinners. Participated in hundreds of demos and marches. I played at Occupy Wall Street.”

Stein was inspired to play for his neighborhood as fear and uncertainty grips New York.

“I went out on my stoop to raise peoples’ spirits and to bring them together,” he said. “I think it is absolutely critical that as many people as possible in New York City, New York state, and all over the country, do not go out to keep the coronavirus from spreading. To keep the load on the hospitals down so they don’t run out of vents and PPE.



"I started doing this because I wanted to make a contribution," he said. "I'm 71 years old. For years now my contributions have been through music. The wonderful thing about music is that when people do music together, it brings them together and it lifts peoples' spirits. Since I am an over 70 year old I should not go out."

He took inspiration from what he had seen from other countries as they face the same hardships.

"If they are hanging out windows in France, we have stoops," he said. "I've played out on the stoop before."

Some days the sounds of his accordion aren't alone.

"Neighbors play the drum, tambourine, or maracas," Stein said.

His concerts maintain the all-important social distancing standards necessary to slow the spread of COVID-19.

"I wanted to be totally compliant with the idea we should stay at home to flatten the curve," he said. "Our stoops are much more than 6 feet apart. I did it this way because I want people to stay home - stay far away from each other."

The concerts seem to be a hit among his neighbors, with people taking to their stoops and yards to enjoy Stein's uplifting lineup.

"I saw people leaning out of their windows clapping or just dancing in their houses," Stein said. "I did mostly upbeat stuff. The Mexican hat dance. The hokey pokey. I did some Jewish, Italian, Irish, Calypso, a lot of Latin X. We got people moving. It was a group activity while staying very far apart."

Stein said his concert made New York City news. And caught the attention of fellow musicians.

"Other people are starting to do it," he said. "We're trying to start a movement that way. I've gotten a lot of positive

feedback from people. My friends living in England sent me a video of their toddler grandson dancing to my music. They played the YouTube post and he was dancing to the music.

"That's the amazing thing about the web and Facebook," he said. "People see it all over the world."

Stein is grateful he has a good retirement and can play music solely for the love of it.

"I am so grateful to PEF and to all unions for the fact I have a good retirement," he said. "I don't have to make money on my music. I have a pension and Social Security thanks to many unions and that has enabled me to do socially conscious music without getting paid for it and make that contribution."





2020 PEF Budget and Legislative Advocacy:

Please see below for an analysis of the 2020-21 New York State Budget, as adopted. Working under the direction of the President, Executive Council, the Executive Board, the Statewide PAC Committee, and the LM Committee, the Legislative Department worked to advocate on behalf of PEF's 52,000 members.

Our FIGHT BACK campaign included generating more than 1,100 individual letters to legislators; writing and delivering testimony to the fiscal committees of both houses of the Legislature at the Workforce Development and the Public Protection and General Government Hearings and developing issue-specific talking points for in-district and other member advocacy.

The Legislative Department staff met with the program staff and fiscal staff in both houses of the Legislature, key members of both the Senate and Assembly and the Governor's staff to outline our concerns with certain budget proposals and to seek support for PEF's budget issues.

As the pandemic took hold, the department advocated with the Governor's office, legislative and staff to secure personal protective equipment and other needed supplies for our members on the front lines and worked to ensure that a

timely budget was adopted so that all PEF members were paid in timely manner. Additionally, after learning that the state faced a \$10 billion budget gap,

PEF generated and advanced a list of potential revenue actions for use by the Executive and the Legislature to close the shortfall and maintain the programs and services our members deliver.

While the 2020-2021 state budget has been adopted, we must remain vigilant as the state works to defeat this pandemic and recover economically. As part of this year's budget agreement, the Director of the Division of the Budget has new powers to unilaterally cut the state budget if certain revenue benchmarks are not met, spending targets exceed and if the Legislature fails to agree on how to address the potential budget shortfall in a timely manner.

You can be sure that your union will be monitoring this situation closely as we continue to work to meet the programmatic and other needs of our members during the remainder of this legislative session.

PEF SFY 2020–2021 Budget Priorities:

PEF Opposed the Following Proposals in the Governor's Budget and asked for Their Removal:

EXPEDITED CLOSURE OF STATE FACILITIES

Closure of State Prisons within 90 Days Public Protection and General Government (A.9505/S.7505)—Part F

This proposal would allow the Governor to close an undetermined number of Department of Corrections and Community Supervision (DOCCS) facilities provided that 90 days notice is given.

Current law requires 12 months notice so that appropriate planning for inmates, staff and host communities can take place.

PEF Request:

Reject A.9505/S.7505 Part F

Final Action:

ACCEPTED with some additional reporting requirements, including: the Governor must provide both the Temporary President of the Senate and the Speaker of the Assembly a list of the facilities slated for closure, the number of inmates and the number of staff in such facilities at least 90 days prior to closure of any facility; and the Commissioner of Corrections and Community Supervision must report on the results of the staff relocation efforts to the legislative leaders in both houses within 60 days after such closure.

OUTSOURCING OF STATE WORK

Continued Reliance on Private Entities for Public Services

This budget continues the disturbing trend of using private for- and not-for-profit entities to do the work which was once done by state employees. Whether it is OITS, OMH, OPWDD, DOT or one of the many other state agencies, we believe that PEF members are best suited to deliver the public services that the state provides. Continuing to divert services and resources to private entities at the expense of individuals, dependent upon state services, is detrimental to clients, state workers and taxpayers.

PEF Request:

Increase the financial support for state agencies so that they can once again provide cost effective, high quality services themselves

Final Action:

MAINTAINED staffing levels proposed by the Governor. The budget also allows the Director of the Budget to make proportional cuts to the budget if certain income or expense benchmarks are missed on April 30, June 30 or December 31

OUTSOURCING OF STATE WORK, CONTINUED

Design-Build Expansion and Extension Transportation, Economic Development and Environmental Conservation

(A.9508/S.7508)—Part DD

This bill would expand the provisions of current law to enable the Office of General Services, the Dormitory Authority, the Urban Development Corporation, the SUNY Construction Fund, the Olympic Regional Development Authority and the Battery Park City Authority to award a contract to a single entity for both the design and construction (design-build) aspects of a project. The types of capital projects for which design-build contracts can be used would be amended to also included buildings and appurtenant structures. This bill would also make design-build permanent.

Design-build allows for privatization of public work that has been traditionally performed by state employees. Important capital projects should be performed by state workers since they focus on the safety and well being of our taxpayers instead of corporate profits.

PEF Request:

Reject A.9508/S.7508 Part DD

Final Action:

ACCEPTED with significant amendments, including language that specifically allows public employee involvement with material source testing, certifications testing, surveying, monitoring of environmental compliance, independent quality control testing and inspection and quality assurance audits. The amended language also calls for annual reporting and a sunset date of Dec. 31, 2022.

ITS Comprehensive Technology Service Contracts Public Protection and General Government

(A.9505/S.7505)—Part X

This bill is the IT version of “design-build.” It would allow a single entity to circumvent the traditional process, which safeguards against fraud and abuse. This proposal would allow for the same firm to design and implement IT systems.

PEF Request:

Reject A.9505/S.7505 Part X

Final Action:

REJECTED



STATE RETIREE BENEFITS

Retiree Health Care Premium Contributions Public Protection and General Government (A.9505/S.7505)—Part V

The Governor proposes to increase the percentage of retiree health care costs for State employees hired on or after October 1, 2020. Retirees' contributions would be based on years of service. The sliding scale formula would cover 50 % of premiums for those with 10 years of service and increase up to 84% of premiums for those with 30 years of service.

The proposal takes effect on October 1, 2020 and only impacts new employees hired on or after that date. This proposal creates another reason for potential employees to not enter State service at a time when the State is already facing a recruitment and retention problem with many agencies.

PEF Request:
Reject A.9505/S. 7505 Part V

Final Action:
REJECTED

End Income Related Monthly Adjustment Amounts (IRMAA) Reimbursement Public Protection and General Government (A.9505/S.7505)—Part S

Effective January 1, 2020, the State would stop the automatic reimbursement of the Income Related Monthly Adjustment Amounts (IRMAA) for Medicare premiums incurred on or after January 1, 2020 for higher income (\$87,000 or more) State retirees. Higher-income retirees currently receive a greater subsidy for New York State Health Insurance Program (NYSHIP) than the amounts received by lower and middle-income retirees.

The roughly 7,600 impacted retirees stand to lose anywhere from \$694 to \$4,164 per year.

PEF Request:
Reject A.9505/S.7505 Part S

Final Action:
REJECTED

Freeze on Medicare Part B Reimbursement Public Protection and General Government (A.9505/S.7505)—Part U

This bill would amend section 167-a of the Civil Service Law to provide that, effective April 1, 2020, State reimbursement to eligible retirees and their dependents for the Medicare Part B standard premium shall not exceed \$144.60 per month. While this represents an increase for some, the language provides that any future increases would be subject to negotiations in the state budget, meaning they are far less likely to happen.

PEF Request:
Reject A.9505/S.7505 Part U

Final Action:
REJECTED

ADDITIONAL PROBLEMS WITH THE EXECUTIVE BUDGET

Voluntary Jail-based Restoration to Competency Programs Health and Mental Hygiene—(A.9507/S.7507) Part W

This proposal would amend Section 730.10 of the Criminal Procedure Law (CPL) to authorize the establishment of jail-based restoration to competency programs, for felony defendants pending judicial hearings, within locally-operated jails, excluding New York City.

Correctional facilities are not the appropriate locations to rehabilitate individuals requiring mental health services. State mental health facilities or other well-equipped hospitals or centers are where these individuals should be restored to competency.

PEF Request:

Reject A.9507/S.7507 Part W

Final Action:

REJECTED

Sex Offender Management and Treatment Act (SOMTA) Health and Mental Hygiene—(A.9507/S.7507) Part X

This proposal would establish a new program that would a physical separation of sex offenders who are civilly confined under the Mental Health Law and those that are classified in the forensic population in the OMH Forensic Psychiatric Centers (PCs). While the two classes of offenders are mandated to undertake the same psychiatric therapies and protocols, this proposal would authorize the physical transfer of psychiatric nurse practitioners or physicians to a satellite facility for the care of such individuals.

PEF Request:

Reject the involuntary transfer language contained in A.9507/A7507Part X and hire additional psychiatric nurse practitioners and physicians to appropriately address the needs of the target population

Final Action:

ACCEPTED and moved to A.9508/S7508 Part OOO

Closure of the Youth Leadership Academy in Delaware County

The 2020-21 Executive Budget proposes closure of the Youth Leadership Academy, a limited secure facility in Delaware County, in 2021. This facility serves male at-risk youth who are placed with the OCFS by the family court. The program provides a full array of counseling, education, vocational training, health care, mental health and other services to ensure that these most at-risk youth have the support necessary to lead productive lives.

PEF Request:

Reject the closure of the Youth Leadership Academy in Delaware County

Final Action:

ACCEPTED

Elimination of the SUNY Hospital Subsidy

The 2018-19 approved budget provided a subsidy of \$92 Million for SUNY's three hospitals (Downstate, Stony Brook and Upstate), in addition to \$78.6 Million in capital funding. Last year's final budget as well as this year's Executive Budget proposal does not include any subsidy for the hospitals, potentially causing a funding shortage.

PEF Request:

Restore the \$87 million subsidy

Final Action:

NO RESTORATION



Reduction in the Roswell Park Cancer Institute Subsidy

Aid to Localities (A.9503/S.7503) p. 502 & Capital Projects (A.9504/S.7504) p. 318

This subsidy was \$102.6 million last year. The proposed amount this year is \$89.267 million.

PEF Request:

Restore the subsidy back to last year's level of \$102.6 million

Final Action:

FUNDED and REMAINED at the proposed \$89.267 million level (A.9500/S.7500 p.761 and A.9504/S.7504 p.378)

Establish the Office of Cannabis Management Revenue (A.9509/S.7509) – Part BB

The bill would add a new article 7-A to the consolidated law enacting the "Cannabis Regulation and Tax Act" and establishing the "Office of Cannabis Management" (OCM) within the Division of Alcohol Beverage Control. The OCM will administer all licensing, production, and distribution of cannabis products in the adult-use, industrial, and medical cannabis markets. The Executive proposes to add 191 staff to administer the Office. PEF already represents the state's medical marijuana inspectors. These new employees should be selected through existing Civil Service processes, should maintain the same rights, benefits and privileges consistent with the organized state workforce and these new staff should be designated in titles covered by the PEF bargaining unit.

PEF Request:

If the NYS Legislature approves of Part BB of A.9509/S.7509, then all new staff should be hired in accordance with existing Civil Service processes and all appropriate professional staff titles assigned to the PEF bargaining unit.

Final Action:

REJECTED

PEF SUPPORTED THE FOLLOWING PROPOSALS IN THE GOVERNOR'S BUDGET AND ASKED FOR THEIR INCLUSION:**Strengthening of Public Employee Unions Public Protection and General Government (A.9505/S.7505)— Part W**

This bill helps to strengthen public unions in three ways after the Janus v. AFSCME Supreme Court decision. This first is to clarify that it is not an improper practice for the employer to give out an employee's personal information to an employee organization. This law also allows for employee organizations to meet with new employees through new employee orientations. Finally, the law clarifies that employee organizations or others shall not be liable for any dues or fees collected prior to the court decision.

PEF Request:

Accept A.9505/S.7505 Part W

Final Action:

ACCEPTED

PEF SUPPORTED THE FOLLOWING PROPOSALS IN THE GOVERNOR’S BUDGET AND ASKED FOR THEIR INCLUSION: CONTINUED

Sexual Harassment Disclosure from State Contractors Public Protection and General Government (A.9505/S.7505)—Part BB

This bill would requires those companies bidding on state contracts to report the number or judgments or settlements relating to sexual harassment that they have had during the previous year. An annual report of such data will be prepared by the Comptroller.

PEF Request:
Accept A.9505/S.7505
Part BB

Final Action:
REJECTED

Pay Equity at State and Local Public Authorities Public Protection and General Government (A.9505/S.7505)—Part QQ

This proposal would expand recently-enacted pay equity laws for state employees to employees of state and local public authorities.

PEF Request:
Accept A.9505/S.7505
Part QQ

Final Action:
ACCEPTED

Increases Penalty for Assault on Motor Vehicle Inspectors Transportation, Economic Development and Environmental Conservation (A.9508/S.7508)—Part D, Subpart A

This proposal would increase the penalty for assault on various local and state government employees, including PEF-represented Motor Vehicle Inspectors.

PEF Request:
Accept A.9508/S.7508
Part D , Subpart

Final Action:
REJECTED

Make the Fracking Ban Permanent Transportation, Economic Development and Environmental Conservation (A.9508/S.7508)—Part WW

This bill would codify the administrative ban on high-volume hydraulic fracturing for natural gas (“fracking”) and make it permanent.

PEF Request:
Accept A.9508/S.7508
Part WW

Final Action:
ACCEPTED

Make Permanent the New York Buy American Act Transportation, Economic Development and Environmental Conservation (A.9508/S.7508)—Part EEE

This proposal would make permanent the 2017 law requiring the use of U.S. made iron and steel used in roads and bridges.

PEF Request:
Accept A.9508/S.7508
Part EEE

Final Action:
ACCEPTED



**Streamline the Process to Establish the State's First Veterans Cemetery
Education, Labor and Family Assistance (A.9506/S.7506)
—Part O**

This bill would remove some of the legal impediments which have long stood in the way of the state establishing its first veterans cemetery.

PEF Request:
Accept A.9506/S.7506
Part O

Final Action:
REJECTED

**Modernization of Center for Environmental Health Fees
Health and Mental Health (A.9507/S.7507)—Part P**

This bill would raise six fees administered by the Department of Health's Center for Environmental Health. Five of these fees have not increased in 30 years. The increased revenue will help the Department carry out the expanded operations of these programs.

PEF Request:
Accept A.9507/S.7507
Part P

Final Action:
ACCEPTED, except for the
camp fee increase, and
moved to
A.9506/S.7506 Part DD

**Reduction in Justice Center Statewide Central
Register Checks
Health and Mental Health (A.9507/S.7507)—Part AA**

This proposal would eliminate the mandate that every Justice Center investigation also include a Statewide Central Register of Child Abuse and Maltreatment check. These checks are often unnecessary and can lead to delays in the investigations conducted by the Justice Center.

PEF Request:
Accept A.9507/S.7507
Part AA

Final Action:
REJECTED

**\$2 Million OITS Certification Training
State Operations—A.9500/S.7500; P. 411**

This funding allows for up to \$2 Million to be spent for training of Office of Information Technology Services (OITS) employees towards achieving specific certifications that are not currently held by employees in sufficient quantity to meet the state's needs.

PEF Request:
Accept A.9500/S.7500

Final Action:
ACCEPTED

OTHER ISSUES INCLUDED IN THE BUDGET AGREEMENT:

Broadening the Definition of “Technology” Public Protection and General Government (A.9505/S.7505)—Part Y

This legislation would greatly expand the definition of “technology” from a simple definition into one that includes all means of data movement and also includes all associated consulting, management, facilities maintenance and training.

PEF Position:
OPPOSE

Time Off for Voting Public Protection and General Government (A.9505/S.7505)—Part AAA

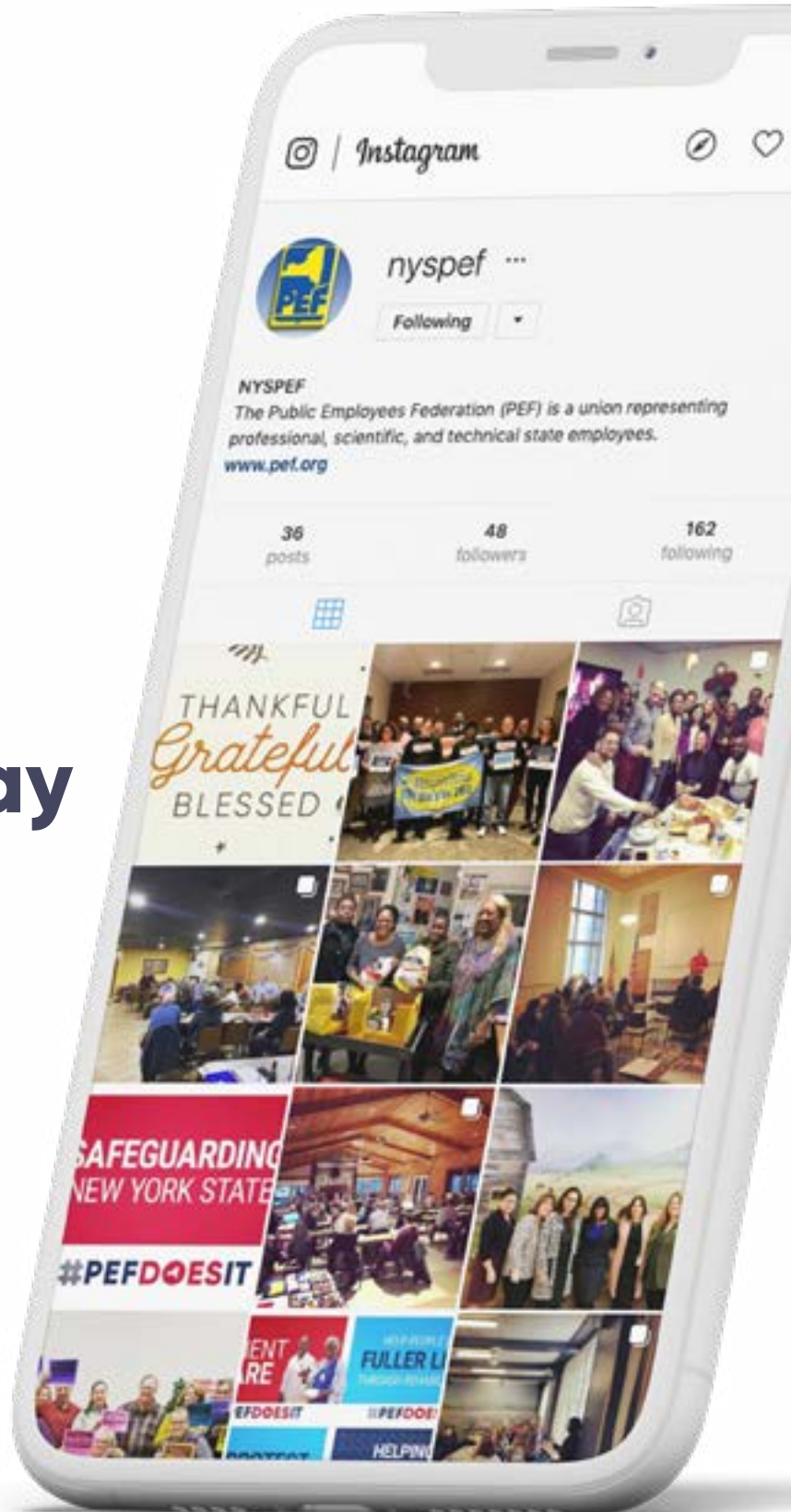
This new portion of the budget would diminish last year’s much heralded increase in time off for voting. A year ago, the budget allowed for up to three hours at the beginning or end of a workday to vote. The new language now reverts back to the previous law which allowed up to two hours only if an employee did not have four hours at the beginning or end of the workday to vote.

PEF Position:
OPPOSE





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on Instagram!
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Executive board meets remotely, discusses budget, elections, COVID impact on members

By KATE MOSTACCIO

As New York's cases of novel coronavirus surged in late March, PEF President Wayne Spence drafted a policy to allow the PEF Executive Board to hold its March meeting remotely via teleconference to safeguard the health of its members.

"During the COVID pandemic, Executive Board meetings shall not be conducted in person," Spence said over teleconference on March 26. "Instead they shall be conducted by teleconferencing. Any actions taken by the Executive Board shall be subject to formal ratification at an in-person meeting when it's safe."

Spence told board representatives that he intends to meet by teleconference once a month as long as the COVID pandemic prevents in-person meetings.

PEF staff has been busy implementing changes as they became necessary and working to protect and serve PEF members facing unprecedented issues in their workplaces.

"We'd all agree the last few weeks have been almost beyond words," said Spence. "It's just surreal what's going on. Since the governor declared a state of emergency, we've been in constant motion. We are facing problems more serious than anything we've ever dealt with before."

PEF has been in daily communications with the governor, his staff and with GOER (the Governor's Office of Employee Relations). "We have made some significant gains," Spence said. "One of the first was a statewide telecommuting policy. The reality is that 75 percent of our members are currently not working from home, every day and every hour we are pushing agencies to look at telecommuting."

Other PEF gains include the carryover of more than 40 days of vacation credits starting April 1 – time employees would normally have to forfeit.

The union has been working tirelessly to make sure members are supplied with personal protective equipment.

"We have been advocating daily and vigorously for adequate PPE statewide," Spence said. "It's a huge problem not just for our members, for all health care workers. Many of our members are in harms way. We are doing everything we can to address this dire need as quickly as possible."

PEF worked with the Office for People with Developmental Disabilities on guidelines for quarantine; collaborated with the Department of Corrections and Community Supervision to halt in-person parole visits; pushed for Civil Service exams to be postponed; and has been advocating for more members to be designated as nonessential employees to work from home.

Vice President Sharon V. DeSilva stressed the importance of documenting concerns and requests in writing so PEF leaders and staff can act on them.

"We've issued guidance (several emails) on how to address member concerns at the labor management table," DeSilva said. "We're asking that you please reach out to your field reps, and all of your agency PEF Leaders to discuss all concerns and put them in writing."

"We need to push for staggered telecommuting/reduction in working hours. If there is inadequate PPE or cleaning, we want everything to be in writing," DeSilva said. "We need evidence we can use down the road, if necessary. We want to memorialize all our concerns/requests in writing."

Board members engaged in a robust question and answer session with PEF leaders and staff. The information shared during that session is included on the Q&A updated daily on the PEF.org website. Check that page frequently for important information, as it is updated nearly daily.

PEF Budget

PEF Secretary Treasurer Kay Alison Wilkie provided a brief segment on the PEF budget, without going into specifics due to security concerns. Spence detailed difficulties another union had faced being hacked during a teleconference meeting so the decision was made to keep specific numbers out of the update.

"All the budget choices reflect PEF policies, framework and strategic goals," Wilkie said. "Our strategic goals include increasing new member conversions; securing a responsible, respectful contract; expanding statewide membership engagement; and supporting PEF's political agenda."

Wilkie said the PEF membership has no private entities and is set at 51,677. The budget makes no assumptions a collective



bargaining agreement would be in place and includes modest staff increases. She said committees were funded following an examination of multi-year patterns and allocations of resources reflect PEF's priorities.

"COVID-19 crisis adjustments can be made," Wilkie said. "We can adjust as we understand what the full implications of this crisis are. It's too early to predict at this point. We have flexibility with contingency plans."

This budget as proposed will be implemented April 1, subject to formal approval at the next in-person Executive Board meeting that is possible.

Wilkie highlighted one factor in the year-to-date financial statements – division standings.

"We had 79 percent in good standing and 5 percent improved," Wilkie said. "That's pretty remarkable."

Political endorsements

PEF Vice President Randi DiAntonio reported out on the Statewide Political Action Committee endorsements.

"Up until early March we were able to meet and moving along on our endorsements," she said. "We were able to go through our complete regional PAC and statewide PAC process for primaries and special elections and each region sent out questionnaires and conducted interviews."

She presented the recommended candidates, which had been approved by regional and statewide PAC members.

Stay tuned to PEF communications for more information.

"The world is extremely fluid right now, as is the political and election process," DiAntonio said. "We will continue to update you."

PEF elections

Kristie Furman, Director of Divisions, reported that all PEF elections have been suspended.

"We can't be sure people can obtain signatures safely," Furman said. "All currently elected will remain in office until the elections can be resumed."

Delegate elections have also been postponed. [Click here](#) for more information.

Convention update

Director of Special Events Kim Partridge reported on the 2020 PEF Convention, including proposed changes to the rules and agenda that would need to be ratified at a future in-person meeting.

One proposed change is that cash will no longer be accepted as payment for ticketed events.

"We had some difficulties doing tickets on site because of cash being handled," Partridge said. "We are going to institute no cash."

She reminded board members of the importance of timely hotel and travel cancellations.

"We've had some issues with cancellations at the last minute that result in charges and increased expenses to PEF," she said. "We are asking for delegates to follow the deadlines and be responsible on their end for changes that come up in a timeframe that allows us to notify the hotels."

Proposed agenda changes include ending the President's Reception at 9 p.m. again, giving delegates time afterward for other events. The Monday Nurses Committee breakfast would also be moved to a luncheon at 12:30.

Partridge said tentative plans are being made for another solidarity event, similar to last year's walk to the Empire State Plaza steps, for Tuesday during the lunch hour.

"We would like to do something involving brother and sister unions in Canada on the bridge," she said.

The proposed changes also include ending plenary session earlier on Wednesday to allow time for delegates to get to the train station.

Stories from the frontlines

President Spence invited two Eboard members, working on the frontlines of the COVID-19 response, to speak to the members of the board about their experiences.

Susan Billi, a registered nurse surveyor, normally works in Central Islip on Long Island. She is a certified infection control nurse and has been an RN since 1976. Billi found herself called into service in New Rochelle and shared her story.

"I received a call from my supervisor stating there was a call put out for volunteers to go to New Rochelle to address the coronavirus issues," she told the board.

Billi soon got her first taste of being a first responder.

"As an RN I have never been called on to be a first responder to a ground zero type of situation," she said. "There was a command center set up. I will tell you that things were not running quickly at that command center. It took time to get that site up and running."

Billi was part of a team of three sent to collect nose and throat swabs from those identified as high risk in the neighborhood.

"We had to be fit tested for n95 masks," she said. "That's beyond a surgical mask. We filled out paperwork submitted to NYS Workers Comp and NYS Employee Health Services. We were asked questions related to our health. Did I have asthma or heart problems? That took seven hours to give clearance for me to be fit tested."

Billi said staff in New Rochelle were well protected.

"At all times while I was in New Rochelle we had all of the PPE that was recommended by the CDC in Atlanta for this particular virus," she said. "That included protective eye ware, n95 masks, impervious gown, gloves in every size."

The runs for swabs soon expanded beyond New Rochelle, into Washington Heights, the west side of Manhattan, Harlem, and as far north as Hasting-on-Hudson and Croton-on-Hudson.

New Yorkers were thankful for the attention of the health care workers.

"Many of the patients whose homes we entered, their first words were, 'I want to thank you for being here to address this medical issue that I have,'" Billi said. "It was a humbling experience because as a nurse with over 40 years of experience, it's very rare that I hear a thank you."

PEF member and Executive Board member Richard Fletcher, a disability analyst with the state Office of Temporary Disability Assistance in Region 5 (Binghamton area), was assigned to the drive-through testing site at Jones Beach (Long Island).

"My agency put out a request for volunteers," Fletcher said. "I've been here for 11 days. Jones Beach is a drive-through COVID testing site. Members of the public and law enforcement come here to be tested. They drive up, register, are tested by a three-person team, then go on their way."

Fletcher said Jones Beach is a massive operation with a lot of moving parts. "The first day was chaotic. A lot of state employees have been mandated here. This is an unprecedented pandemic, none of us have ever faced this."

The process improves daily, Fletcher said. "Every day things have gotten better," he said. "At no time I have been out here have I felt unsafe. They've done a good job with what we've had."

Social distancing measures are being implemented at the site to safeguard staff.

"To minimize exposure, the rule is six feet and two minutes interaction," Fletcher said. "We sit four to a table, as far as we can. Anything they can do to distance us socially, to keep us safe, they are doing."

Fletcher thanked PEF for sending some gear to the site.

"I want to thank President Spence," he said. "I sent him an email, can you send us some PEF stuff. Some yellow hats and scarves. Most days here it looks like a contract rally. Most of the staff are wearing PEF scarves and hats."

Leaders, Eboard reps thank members, staff

Many Executive Board members and PEF leadership expressed gratitude for the work of PEF staff and PEF members during a time of unparalleled crisis.

Secretary-Treasurer Wilkie was thankful to PEF staff for pulling together and continuing to serve PEF members from home.

"A lot of work has been done behind the scenes," Wilkie said. "Health and Safety, Field Services, Special Events, Legal, MIS. The exceptional work by MIS in helping staff work remotely was made possible by our recent IT infrastructure upgrades."

The MIS team had all staff up and working remotely in 48 hours.

Vice President DiAntonio thanked her fellow members for sharing their frontline stories.

"Listening to our two members describe their experiences has really left me feeling so proud to be a PEF member and be a PEF leader," she said. "I know we are all working so hard to protect our members, our families and our communities. I am humbled and proud and think we're heroes right now."

"We will get through this," she said. "We will be stronger together."

PEF Contract Chair Darlene Williams urged continued solidarity and asked members to share their stories of the important work they are doing.

"We have been doing a lot of tagging people's pictures," she said. "We are now truly engaged in Twitter. We are really gaining momentum in the social media. The public knows we are protecting the citizens of New York. The politicians are picking everything up and saying good job. People around the world are saying thank you."

President Spence thanked members for staying the course.

"Thank all of you for the work you are continuing to do during this crisis," Spence said. "Your leadership and commitment is essential to this union. We are in an unprecedented and extremely challenging moment in our lives. But I know what PEF members are capable of and I know we will come through this together."

The August Executive Board meeting is planned for August 27-28.

PEF elections temporarily halted

All PEF elections are currently suspended. PEF will review these suspended elections with its parent unions after the COVID-19 crisis subsides. Additional information will be announced in future issues of The Communicator and via the PEF website and social media platforms. If you have questions relating to elections, please call PEF Assistant Director of Divisions Kristie Furman at 800-342-4306 ext. 231 or email her at kfurman@pef.org.

Assistance when it was needed

When the state needed drivers to assist with coronavirus (COVID-19) response, PEF President Wayne Spence stepped up.

Spence worked 12-hour days driving New York State Department of Health employees from house to house in New Rochelle as they collected samples from and checked on residents under quarantine for possible COVID-19 exposure.

Spence, as a state parole officer, holds necessary qualifications to volunteer as a driver and he didn't hesitate to travel to New Rochelle, a known hot zone of coronavirus cases.

"Many of our members are on the front lines, facing this virus every day on the job," Spence said. "When they were looking for volunteers, I was willing and qualified. I can't ask our members to do something I'm not willing to do myself."

Spence assisted the health care workers with proper containment and disposal of their gear, in addition to driving them around to homes.



Sign up **TODAY** for the eCommunicator

Keeping PEF members current on PEF news, emailed to your mobile device or home computer monthly. www.pef.org/ecommunicator-signup/

Submit 2019 Empire Plan claims by April 29

By **ERIKA FRASIER**

If the Empire Plan is your primary insurer, April 29, 2020 (120 days after the end of the calendar year), is the last day to submit your 2019 claims if you have used a non-network provider or non-network pharmacy.

If The Empire Plan is your secondary insurer, you must submit claims by April 29, 2020, or within 120 days after your primary health insurance plan processes your claim, whichever is later.

For non-network provider claim forms, you can ask your agency health benefits administrator or find them online at <http://www.cs.ny.gov/employee-benefits>. Just follow the prompts there to access NYSHIP Online and select "Forms". Or call 1-877-7-NYSHIP (1-877-769-7447) and choose the appropriate program.

Submit completed claim forms with supporting bills, receipts and, if applicable, a Medicare summary notice or statement from your other primary plan as follows:

The Empire Plan Basic Medical Program, the Home Care Advocacy Program (HCAP) and non-network physical medicine services:

UnitedHealthcare Insurance Co. of New York
P.O. Box 1600
Kingston, NY 12402-1600
Claims submission fax: 845-336-7716

Non-network inpatient and outpatient hospital services:

Empire BlueCross BlueShield
New York State Service Center
P.O. Box 1407, Church Street Station
New York, New York, 10008-1407
Claim submission fax: 888-367-9788

Non-network mental health and substance abuse services:

Beacon Health Options, Inc.
P.O. Box 1850
Hicksville, NY 11802

Claims submission fax: 855-378-8309

Prescriptions filled in 2019 at non-network pharmacies or without using your Empire Plan Benefit Card:

CVS Caremark
P.O. Box 52136
Phoenix, AZ 85072-2136



**The Empire
Plan**

2019

RECOMMIT TODAY!

NEW + EXISTING PEF MEMBERS

SIGN NOW!





Letters to the Editor:

Letters to the Editor

Thanks for highlighting PEF scientists

To the Editor:

I knew Wadsworth Center PEF members/scientists would be involved in this. They are world-class. We had our first Nobel Prize at Wadsworth a few years ago.

Thanks for the heads up (about the role of these members).

ROGER BENSON

(Research scientist 1972-2006 and PEF president 1997-2006)

Albany

Crisis service should spur members' raises

To the Editor:

Maybe (our key role in Covid-19 crisis) is the answer to getting our 2019 raises.

ED EADES

Ravena



The Communicator PEF

Email your letters to:
thecomunicator@pef.org



Make sure you're counted, not scammed

The 24th U.S. Census is starting now and we all need to stand up and be counted.

Retirees can help get every household accounted for by talking one-on-one with family, friends and neighbors about the importance of being counted. Census data is used to distribute nearly a trillion dollars in federal funding and to determine each state's number of electoral votes and congressional seats.

New York could lose one or possibly two congressional representatives to vote and speak up for us on national issues that directly affect us such as Social Security and Medicare.

We need to get every resident in New York counted to ensure we don't get short changed. Retirees can take an active role in the census process by:

- Completing their census filings online or returning their census forms;
- becoming federal census takers;
- staying informed and getting involved.

The census is safe for all state residents, regardless of their immigration status. Don't let anyone intimidate you or your loved ones from participating. Sharing your personal census information with other federal agencies is illegal.

Since much of the collection of information is done digitally, getting accurate census data for those over age 55, in particular, can be challenging.

Be on the lookout for scams including fake census forms that are out there. If you're asked for a donation, money, your Social Security number, mother's maiden name, credit card or bank account numbers, or a political contribution, it's a scam. Additionally, web addresses should end in ".gov" and include an "https" prefix. Make sure the "s" is included because that means it is secure.

The official U.S. Census Bureau website is [census.gov](https://www.census.gov).

If you receive census information through the mail, check for a return address of Jeffersonville, IN; if it's not from there, it's not from the U.S. Census Bureau.

Census visitors to your home must carry a valid U.S. Census ID badge. If you think you've received a fake census form, or been approached by a fake census taker, contact the Census Bureau at 800-523-3205.

See the following message from the US Census Bureau:

What to Expect in the Mail

When it's time to respond, most households will receive an invitation in the mail.

Every household will have the option of responding online, by mail, or by phone.

Depending on how likely your area is to respond online, you'll receive either an invitation encouraging you to respond online or an invitation along with a paper questionnaire.

Letter Invitation

Most areas of the country are likely to respond online, so most households will receive a letter asking you to go online to complete the census questionnaire (or to respond by phone).

We plan to work with the U.S. Postal Service to stagger the delivery of these invitations over several days. This way we can spread out the number of users responding online, and we'll be able to serve you better if you need help over the phone.

- An invitation to respond online to the 2020 Census;
- (Some households will also receive paper questionnaires.); and
- A reminder letter.



If you haven't responded yet:

- A reminder postcard;
- A reminder letter and paper questionnaire; and
- A final reminder postcard before we follow up in person.

Letter Invitation and Paper Questionnaire

Areas that are less likely to respond online will receive a paper questionnaire along with their invitation. The invitation will also include information about how to respond online or by phone.

We understand you might miss our initial letter in the mail.

Every household that hasn't already responded will receive reminders and will eventually receive a paper questionnaire.

It doesn't matter which initial invitation you get or how you get it—we will follow up in person with all households that don't respond.

Saluting members on their retirements

By **SHERRY HALBROOK**

PEF's gratitude and best wishes go out to its members who are retiring and moving on to the next chapter of their lives.

The union hopes they will join PEF Retirees and remain active and valued participants in the PEF family.

This month, we salute:

- **Ernest Dietzel**, PEF Division 190, state Department of Taxation and Finance;
- **Robert Jacobs**, PEF Division 190, state Department of Taxation and Finance;
- **Conchita Morin**, PEF Division 190, state Department of Taxation and Finance; and
- **Michael O'Keefe**, PEF Division 190, state Department of Taxation and Finance.

Are you or PEF members you know retiring? Please send information for this column to thecommunicator@pef.org.



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 to a specific person listed below, call the number after their name.

- **Stephen Bailey** is an information technology specialist 2 at the state Office of Information Technology Services in Albany. Call 518-457-4272;
- **Kimberly Benware** is a teaching and research center specialty nurse at SUNY Upstate University Hospital in Syracuse. Call 315-464-4943;
- **Marco Cardenas** is a parole officer at the state Department of Corrections and Community Supervision parole office in Peekskill. Call 914-654-8690.
- **Brooke Dimare** is a social work supervisor 1 at Mohawk Valley Psychiatric Center in Utica. Call 315-738-4424.
- **Theresa Fernandez** is a utility consumer assistance specialist 3 at the state Department of Public Service in New York City. Call 518-457-4272;
- **Marlene Garrett** is a teaching and research center nurse 2 at SUNY Upstate University Hospital in Syracuse. Call 315-464-4943;
- **Michael Mansky** is an offender rehabilitation coordinator at Greene Correctional Facility in Coxsackie. Call 518-731-2741;
- **Joseph Mbotchahawo** is an information technology specialist 2 at the state Office of Information Technology Services in Albany. Call 518-457-4272;
- **John Morano** is a vocational instructor 4 at Wende Correctional Facility in Alden. Call 716-937-4000;
- **Roxeen Mundy** is an information technology specialist 2 at the state Office of Information Technology Services in Albany. Call 518-457-4272;
- **Katherine Neely** is an associate psychologist at Buffalo Psychiatric Center in Buffalo. Call 716-816-2554;
- **Osayame Osemwegie** is a licensed master social worker 2 at NYC Children's Center's site in Brooklyn. Call 718-221-4500 ext. 3045;
- **Lucas Rathke** is an information technology specialist 2, programing at the state Office of Information Technology Services in Albany. Call 518-457-4272; and
- **Brian Squadere** is a senior accountant at the state Gaming Commission in Schenectady. Call 518-457-4272.

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 181 and 182 of the 2016-19 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, or call 800-342-4306, ext. 271. Be sure to provide your contact information.



Union mourns loss of health benefits advocate Todd Fryer

By **SHERRY HALBROOK**

PEF has lost a retired member who played a key role in advocating for their health benefits and helping the union negotiate them.

P. Todd Fryer, 72, died March 18 following a long illness. He retired in 2011 from the state Insurance Department after 42 years of service. He was PEF chair of the Joint Health Benefits Committee for the state and its employee unions. Fryer also served in the U.S. Army during the Vietnam War.

Fryer was known for both his dedication and knowledge which was valued highly by both PEF's health benefits staff, and all of those who served with him on contract negotiations teams.

"I worked with Todd Fryer for more than 20 years, when he chaired the Joint Committee on Health Benefits and Lorraine Simpkins and I staffed the committee," said Deborah Stayman, who retired as a health benefits specialist from PEF staff this spring. "Todd was the most dedicated, informed and understanding person I've ever known. He brought a wealth of knowledge from his position at the NY state Insurance Department to serve PEF members having difficulty with their health benefits. In addition, Todd was able to see beyond health benefit issues at the individual member level, to analyze how changes in the plan would affect all PEF members, which was a unique skill."

Simpkins, who also recently retired from as a PEF health benefits specialist, expressed her fond memories and high regard for Fryer as well.

"Todd dedicated a great deal of time and energy over the years serving PEF members in a number of capacities," Simpkins said.

"When I began my employment at PEF in December 1989, Todd was the chair of the PEF Joint Committee on Health Benefits (JCHB). After leaving his job at the Insurance Department, he would often stop at PEF headquarters to help Deborah and I with any questions or concerns we had.

"Todd was a wealth of knowledge when it came to the New York State Health Insurance Program (NYSHIP), and he graciously took the time to share it with us. He took his responsibilities as chair of the JCHB very seriously, doing whatever was necessary to ensure PEF members received the benefits to which they were entitled.

"During contract negotiations and at JCHB meetings with management, he would often justify the union's position by speaking eloquently about the needs and concerns of PEF members. Many members benefited from Todd's unrelenting advocacy on their behalf. I consider myself extremely fortunate to have known Todd and to have had the pleasure of working with him for over two decades," Simpkins said.

"Todd Fryer is one of the people who built this union and laid a foundation of strong benefits and services for all members," PEF President Wayne Spence said. "His service and achievements will go on benefiting our members for many years to come, and we are all very grateful."





Fire Protection Specialists continue to support public health officials on missions throughout New York State. Today we are thankful for the hard work and dedication by all first responders and healthcare professionals. We are especially grateful for the leadership and courage of our Executive teams and Governor Andrew Cuomo. THANK YOU to all contributing at this critical time. Please be safe as you continue your very important work!



PEF Division 214 NYC DOT members support their Contract Team. Keeping you roads and bridges safe, protecting your water and air supply, who does it - #PEFDOESIT!



Nurses care in so many ways!! These are our RNs from #PEF Division 167 OPWDD making protective masks. #PEFDOESIT #UnionStrong



PEF nurses and many other PEF members from many state agencies at the #COVID19 testing site in PEF Region 12 are standing Strong - #UnionStrong! We thank you for being the hero's that you are protecting New Yorkers every single day! #PEFDOESIT #WeAreUnionStrong



New York State Fire Protection Specialists PEF Div 17

When you build a hospital inside of a convention center fire safety doesn't take a back seat. Fire Protection Specialists conducted fire extinguisher and just in time training with crews from the National Guard at the Jacob K. Javits Convention Center in NYC.



Amy Lee Pacholk, a nurse from Stony Brook University Hospital, details what a day on the job is like for medical professionals dealing with the coronavirus pandemic in and around New York City.



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