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President Spence leads delegation to D.C. in fight to save SUNY Downstate

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The President's Message By WAYNE SPENCE



PEF power grows, from Brooklyn to Buffalo to D.C.!

The power of union and community solidarity was on display over the last month - in the halls of the New York State Legislature, in communities from Brooklyn to Buffalo, and even on Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C.

In the fight to keep SUNY Downstate open and serving the community, PEF partnered with United University Professions (UUP), concerned local clergy, and state legislators, leveraging our collective voices to halt the planned transformation. I traveled to Washington, D.C., with a team of staff, clergy, and PEF leaders last week for a [productive meeting with U.S. Congresswoman Yvette Clarke](#), whose district includes SUNY Downstate.

[Our lobbying on PEF legislative issues fared well this year](#), with passage of our anti-bullying bill; legislation that will regulate the use of Artificial Intelligence by State agencies, and workers' compensation for all workers who suffer mental injuries on the job, among many others. All these PEF priorities must now be signed by the Governor before becoming law, so be on the lookout for letter-writing campaigns and other ways you can express your solidarity in the second half of the year. The Governor has until Dec. 31, 2024, to sign the bills.

The current [PEF Executive Board met for the last time](#) (the three-year term ends July 31, 2024) on May 30-31 in Albany and Department of Civil Service Commissioner Timothy R. Hogues updated the board on improvements to the Civil Service system, including expanded exams and better notification of upcoming tests. In addition, he shared the great news that the State has put out its request for proposals to conduct a statewide salary review of all titles. PEF is advocating for a two-salary-grade increase across the board in an effort to bring state salaries in line with the private sector. The commissioner also discussed the NY HELPS program, and board members urged him to make sure existing Civil Service lists are not bypassed when considering promotional opportunities.

If New York wants to recruit and retain a talented workforce, it will also need to continue improving Tier 6 of the State pension plan. [The board welcomed Senator Robert Jackson, chair of the Civil Service and Pensions Committee, and Assemblywoman Stacey Pheffer Amato, chairwoman of the Committee on Governmental Employees](#), to speak on the topic.

I always like to end with some good news, so let me inform you that thanks to [Article 15 of the PEF contract](#), members are now eligible for up to \$5,000 per calendar year for college tuition reimbursement, and \$300 in annual reimbursement for certification and license renewals.

I wish you all a relaxing and productive start to your summer. We'll be back in late July with our summer double issue.

In Unity,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Wayne Spence". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Wayne Spence
PEF President

President
Spence leads
delegation to
D.C. in fight
to save SUNY
Downstate





PEF, UUP and NYC clergy leaders pose for a photo with Congresswoman Clarke following their meeting on June 5, 2024. From left to right: PEF Political Director Leah Gonzalez, Rev. Dr. Joseph Chukwu, Pastor James Richmond, Bishop Orlando Findlayter, Pastor Kyran Leo John, UUP Downstate Chapter President Redetha Abrahams-Nichols, U.S. Rep. Yvette Clarke, PEF SUNY Downstate Council Leader Joan Rosegreen, PEF Region 11 Coordinator Bernadette O'Connor, Minister John Williams, UUP President Fred Kowal, PEF President Wayne Spence, PEF Assistant Director of Organizing Dr. Christine Pluiose.

PEF, UUP, NYC clergy bring Brooklyn Needs Downstate message to Washington

By **ROB MERRILL**

WASHINGTON — Nearly five months after both PEF President Wayne Spence and UUP President Fred Kowal received a phone call from SUNY Chancellor John King informing them of a mysterious plan to “transform” SUNY Downstate, both union leaders found themselves in the Rayburn House Office Building on June 5 thanking U.S. Rep. Yvette Clarke for her help saving SUNY Downstate and securing a commitment from her that the critical healthcare hub in her Brooklyn home district will not be neglected.

Spence and Kowal were joined by five members of the “Concerned Clergy of NYC,” a group of faith leaders who partnered with the unions from the beginning of the fightback campaign. Also on the trip were key PEF and UUP leaders who work at SUNY Downstate, as well as legislative staff from PEF and the American Federation of Teachers.

“We’re here along with PEF and UUP because the fight to save SUNY Downstate continues,” said Bishop Orlando Findlayter, who serves as a pastor at New Hope Christian Fellowship in Brooklyn. “We had a fruitful meeting with Congresswoman Clarke and we are committed to doing what we do – street engagement, community engagement, informing members of the community that SUNY is open, and they should come for services. We’re also providing some level of comfort to the employees – don’t abandon ship – because you are needed by this community.”

Thanks in part to rallies, marches, and public awareness campaigns, the Brooklyn Needs Downstate coalition was successful in “saving” SUNY Downstate by negotiating a deal with Governor Hochul to establish a community advisory board that now must make

recommendations about the future of the hospital by April 1, 2025. There are nine seats on the board, and one will be filled by a union stakeholder, UUP President Kowal. UUP represents more than 3,000 employees at SUNY Downstate.

“We asked for a meeting with Congresswoman Clarke because we know she has a good relationship with the Governor and can stress to her how important it is that the advisory board be established with a transparent process that values community input,” said PEF President Spence. “In addition, the long-term viability of SUNY Downstate may depend on federal dollars and knowing that we have support in Washington really helps.”

The recently passed New York State budget includes \$300 million for capital improvements to SUNY Downstate that will now be set aside until after the board makes its recommendations, and \$100 million in the near term to cover hospital operating costs.

While the board conducts its work, PEF will continue to advocate for the hospital. Additional meetings with State and federal lawmakers – including Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer– are being set up, and further actions involving PEF and UUP members at SUNY Downstate will be planned.

“As a PEF elected officer, I’ve now been part of two campaigns to save SUNY Downstate – in 2012 and again this year – and we’ll stay in the fight until the future of this hospital that does so much for so many is assured,” said President Spence.

PEF priorities yield legislation to address bullying, AI, disability, and more

By **NAJEE WALKER**

The 2024 New York State legislative session concluded on June 8, with the Senate and Assembly sending more than 800 bills to Governor Kathy Hochul, who now has until Dec. 31, 2024, to sign or veto them.

Building off a successful state budget that included establishing a 3-year final average salary benefit for Tier 6 members, key PEF achievements included legislation centered around cleaning up toxic workplaces at State agencies and protecting the rights of workers with disabilities. Additionally, PEF helped draft the State's first regulations addressing Artificial Intelligence (AI) and backed successful bills focused on workplace safety and mental health.

Legislation to address bullying and abuse pushed by PEF moves to the Governor

[It was September 21, 2023, when PEF first started making noise about workplace bullying at State agencies.](#) That march by members of the PEF Executive Board around Empire State Plaza near the State Capitol brought attention to an issue that had largely gone unnoticed, despite a 2021 survey that found 31 percent of State workers say they have directly experienced bullying while at work.

Working with the Statewide Political Action Committee (SWPAC), PEF drafted legislation that defines what bullying means under New York State law and requires public employers to evaluate their workplaces to determine the risks of abusive conduct and bullying. It also mandates training of employers and employees so that they can identify those risks and learn how to prevent them. It also includes language about "cyberbullying," to cover harassment that can occur through electronic means.

PEF thanks every member who participated in the union's [Toxic Tales campaign](#) to keep the spotlight on the issue and the determined work of the bill's sponsors, Senator Jessca Ramos and Assemblymember Harry Bronson.

New York State breaks ground on AI regulation

Although AI has been in use for many years now, its growth across the State has been rapid and unchecked – until now. PEF and other unions who are part of the NYS AFL-CIO fought this session to make sure that AI oversight is top-of-mind for the state as it potentially threatens the livelihood of public sector workers. PEF President Wayne Spence and leaders from the Office of Information



Technology Services provided testimony about AI, including other states' use of software called COMPAS, which employs an inherently biased algorithm to try and predict the odds formerly incarcerated individuals will commit new crimes while on parole.

The result is the "Legislative Oversight of Automated Decision-making in Government" Act -- also called the LOADinG Act.

If signed by the governor, LOADinG would ensure humans review the decision-making process when it comes to using AI in State government. Additionally, the act prohibits AI use for benefit determinations or delivery and includes protections for collective bargaining and displacement, regular impact assessments and testing as new systems arrive, and transparency about which systems are being used at state agencies.

The bill was sponsored by Senator Kristen Gonzalez and Assemblymember Steven Otis.



Two bills centered around Civil Service Law Section 72

Section 72 of New York State's Civil Service Law provides public employers the right to seek a medical review when it is believed that an employee may be unable to perform duties due to a physical and/or mental disability.

The process can be long and involves removing the employee from work while an exam is conducted. It also often involves a hearing requested by the employee. However, hearing officers have not historically been given binding authority, meaning employers too often ignore their recommendations. Additionally, employees who are put on leave during this process often are not given full records, correspondence or other information regarding the employer's decision to seek a medical review.

Two bills pushed by PEF would amend Section 72 to give employees more power.

The first bill, S08948/A09935, would allow employees more access to information related to the employer's judgement of an employee's ability to perform their duties due to disability. It also allows employees the right to share the information with their authorized representative, such as a PEF field rep.

The second bill, S08960/A09932, gives hearing officers more binding authority. While the employer and employee will still have the right to appeal the decision through the Civil Service Commission, the bill removes the right for the employer to "either uphold the original proposed notice of leave of absence, withdraw such notice, or modify the notice as appropriate."

Both bills were sponsored by Assemblymember Stacey Pheffer Amato and Senator Robert Jackson, two stalwart PEF supporters in the Legislature.

OPWDD staffing bill sent to the governor

Staffing is a primary priority for PEF across all agencies. While several bills designed to make it easier for prospective employees to take civil service exams passed this session, one of the biggest problems in some agencies is a lack of reporting about staffing needs.

One such agency, the Office for People with Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD), could soon be required to produce and publish a report on staffing at state-operated facilities. The bill (S3105A/A9523) recognizes that short staffing too often results in low quality of care. It addresses the issue by requiring a review of OPWDD

staffing back to 2022 and comparing the number of vacant positions to the number of eligible individuals with developmental disabilities who are on a waiting list to receive care. The data would be publicly available on the OPWDD website, forcing the agency to be more transparent about any future home closures or suspensions of services. PEF thanks Senator John Mannion and Assemblymember Rebecca Seawright for sponsoring it.

Continued efforts and looking ahead to 2025

While the 2024 legislative session is in the history books, the work never stops for the union.

"Thanks to the leadership and support of the New York State Senate and Assembly Majorities, led by Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins and Assembly Speaker Carl Heastie as well as key partners like the NYS AFL-CIO, our members and other coalition partners, PEF successfully leveraged the 'Fund Our Future' campaign to build upon our achievements in the 2024 state budget," said President Spence.

All the union's legislative accomplishments built upon significant achievements in the budget process, including additional improvements to Tier 6 of the pension plan, the end of the state's lag payroll and salary deferral programs, continued expansion of inpatient psychiatric beds, and the successful saving of SUNY Downstate Medical Center, which the State wanted to close.

"PEF will continue working with the Governor to encourage her to sign each of these bills into law so that we can continue to make progress attracting and retaining the workers we need so the state can continue to deliver the excellent services taxpayers need and expect," Spence said.



Civil Service commissioner addresses Executive Board; updates on COPE, membership, and recent campaigns

By **KATE STICKLES**

The PEF Executive Board met May 30 and 31 in Albany, hearing from guest speakers and conducting business of the union, including a discussion on the New York Hiring for Emergency Limited Placement Statewide (NY HELPS) program, a report on year-to-date Committee on Political Education (COPE) contributions and membership statistics, and discussion about violence at worksites.



Department of Civil Service Commissioner and Civil Service Commission President Timothy R. Hogues addresses the Executive Board at its May 30 meeting in Albany.

Hogues on Civil Service news

On the first day of Executive Board, Department of Civil Service Commissioner and Civil Service Commission President Timothy R. Hogues updated the board on improvements to Civil Service testing and exams and the continuing initiative to review compensation for state titles. PEF has advocated for a two-salary grade increase for all employees.

"I love people and I care about people," Hogues said. "If you think about public service, yes, there are many titles and roles, but at the end of the day, what it all boils down to is people who try to help their communities. As commissioner of New York state Civil Service and President of the Civil Service Commission, the way I get to help individuals is to try to break down barriers to entry into state government to make sure New York is representative of those that live and play and work here.

"It's very, very important that across state government we realize that people are our greatest resource," he said. "We need to respect and listen to and work with them. I've been told, we can't bring people in fast enough. We have to do something different."

That's where the NY HELPS program and changes Gov. Kathy Hochul made in her budget come into play. Since the inception of the NY HELPS program, Hogues said the state has hired over 9,000 State employees to help reduce the staggering hours of overtime and the rapid burnout due to understaffing.

While NY HELPS has brought people in, stagnant wages that can't compete with the private sector continue to hamper the state's recruitment and retention efforts. The Department of Civil Service was tasked with modernizing the Civil Service pay structure as part of the Governor's budget.

Responses to a Request for Proposals to study compensation statewide are due back mid to late June, Hogues said. Changes already in place include removal of fees for exams, continuous



recruitment for some open competitive jobs, and opening 12 testing centers across the state.

"[President] Wayne [Spence] told me you have to do something about the way you test," Hogues said. "He said, 'Mothers come to me and say they can't make it on Saturday. Now they have to wait another four years.' We listened. We know that our old model using high schools didn't work and we needed to be in control of testing facilities."

[The Department of Civil Service has kicked off campaigns to talk about opportunities across the state, using testimonials from current state employees, billboards, social media, and more.](#)

"We have staff in 10 of our Department of Labor career centers to be boots on the ground in those communities and do outreach to help recruitment," Hogues said, adding Gov. Hochul has also increased staffing in his agency. "I think Wayne got into her ear. We got over 120 individuals in the last cycle of the budget. That's a huge increase in staffing to be able to support the state."

An Executive Board member emphasized the need to make sure existing employees on Civil Service lists aren't being overlooked for promotions when filling vacant positions with NY HELPS hires.

"We have had long conversations to make sure we respect individuals on the list," Hogues said. "We changed language so if there is an established list, agencies would have to use that list on promotional opportunities. For open competitive, that may not be the case."

President Spence said PEF made sure there was language to prevent NY HELPS from being used to circumvent a list. "If that's happening, we want to know," he said. "They are not supposed to do that and if they are, we need to know to hold them accountable."

Hogues asked the Executive Board to keep the information coming.

"I need you to keep telling me what's going on," he said. "I need your help in promoting the opportunities that are available across state government."



State Senator Robert Jackson and Assemblywoman Stacey Pheffer Amato address the PEF Executive Board on May 30, 2024.

Legislators and clergy

[Senator Robert Jackson and Assemblywoman Stacey Pheffer Amato addressed the board](#) on topics ranging from Tier 6 reform; recently passed bills impacting Civil Service Law Section 72 Hearings, which deal with disability and readiness to return to work; and changes to the Civil Service system. Click here to read more about their remarks.

The Executive Board also heard from key players in the Brooklyn Needs Downstate coalition -- including United University Professionals (UUP) President Fred Kowal and a few faith leaders from the Concerned Clergy of New York City, who were critical in the fight to save SUNY Downstate from closure.

The clergy members made one message very clear when addressing the board -- they are in this fight for the long haul and will not stand by when health care in their community is threatened. They said they will keep marching, keep rallying, and keep encouraging members to send letters to their legislators about this vital issue.

Related: PEF, UUP, Clergy bring Brooklyn Needs Downstate message to nation's capital



Workplace violence and bullying campaigns

After the stabbing at Buffalo Psychiatric Center in April, and assaults over the years at numerous other agencies, PEF is doubling down on the need to improve workplace violence prevention measures.

"We have to do better and it's not just the 'O' agencies," President Spence said, adding it's not okay for management to tell staff that "you knew what you were getting into" or it "comes with the job."

[Related: PEF member one of 3 stabbed by patient at Buffalo PC](#)

Buffalo PC Counselor Leader Vinny Ciatello said some changes have begun at the facility, including the use of metal detecting wands.

"It would not have happened without PEF," he said. "We can't thank everybody enough."

President Spence asked that members come forward and share their stories of workplace violence so the union can collect data about the prevalence of the problem.

[A video of the rally May 1 at Kingsboro Psychiatric Center](#) drove home PEF's message that bullying exists in state facilities and the union won't stand for it any longer and vowed to do additional rallies if bullying continues or management retaliates against staff for standing up for themselves.



COPE, membership update

So far, 2024 has been a good year for PEF and COPE – the political action committee that raises money to advocate for union priorities on the federal level. Total COPE income as of April 30, 2024, is up slightly more than 10% over the same timeframe in 2023, and the number of PEF contributors has grown almost 10% as well.

“As of April 18, we are the third best local in the public sector division of SEIU in terms of signing up new members into COPE,” COPE Coordinator Don Morgenstern reported. “We are already on track to meet our SEIU goal of signing up 550 new COPE contributors for the year.”

Director of Organizing Scott Harms said the Organizing Department is hard at work making sure to contact every person who enters the bargaining unit, leveraging SEIU’s database to find more contact information for potential members. Other unions are looking at PEF as a resource to increase their own membership efforts.

“PEF is at the top of the public sector division [of SEIU’s Together We Rise initiative], at 54% of our goal membership signups,” Harms said. “We must continue to sign members up at this rate and remain diligent.” To help, Harms has been compiling more in-depth data to guide the department.

The next PEF Executive Board meeting will take place Aug. 1 and 2, 2024, in Albany.

Recommit Today!

New + Existing PEF Members

SIGN NOW!



Senator Jackson and Assemblywoman Pheffer Amato discuss PEF victories and milestones

By **NAJEE WALKER**

The Executive Board welcomed a pair of special visitors on May 30: State Senator Robert Jackson and Assemblywoman Stacey Pheffer Amato.

As chairperson of the State Assembly Governmental Employees Committee, Amato is working on reforms to the Civil Service system, pension equity for Tier 5 and Tier 6 members, and protecting health insurance benefits.

Amato told the PEF board that while the fight continues to make additional legislative changes to Tier 6, she is optimistic that the work being done in the Assembly is helping to create change and the Governor sees the value of public-sector workers. She also said that while change is incremental, she is sure that PEF and other public-sector workers will get there by continuing to put pressure on the Legislature and the Governor.

"I'm proud of the work that we've done, even on changing the vested contribution rates after five years. And we will continue to do that kind of work," Amato said. "It has been my honor to be your champion here."

Amato shared with the board that two PEF bills passed in the Assembly - bill S08960/A09932, which expands the authority of hearing officers regarding judgement about an employee's inability to perform their duties due to a disability, and bill S08948/A09935, which requires that specific information regarding the judgement of an employee's inability to perform duties due to a disability be provided by the employee and their representative.

She said the bills put a little more power in the hands of employees and their representatives when employees are attempting to make their case during Civil Service Law Section 72 hearings, which deal with disability and readiness to return to work.

Sen. Jackson is chairman of the State Senate Civil Service and Pensions Committee. A former PEF member and staff employee, Jackson is a long time PEF ally. He's also the one who coined the phrase, "Tier 6 Sucks!"

"This year, we reduced the final average salary calculation from five years to the highest three years," he said. "So, when you retire, it is based on the highest three years that you've earned. I want you to be able to retire with your pension, your Social Security,

and whatever little money you have saved up to enjoy your life. That's what this is all about."

Jackson also celebrated the waiver of Civil Service exam fees and other financial barriers to bringing in new workers to fill the estimated 12,000 positions still open across New York State. With the arrival of these changes, the opening of new regional testing centers, and the NY HELPS program allowing for fast-tracked emergency hires, Jackson said that New York is on its way to being an attractive employer again.

"The passage of my bill, S05486, will further illustrate our commitment to accessibility and fairness by requiring broader announcements of Civil Service exams," said Jackson. "We have to be able to announce it where everyone knows it."

Jackson also shared how proud he was that the State Senate passed PEF's Anti-Bullying in the Workplace bill sponsored by Senate Labor Committee Chair Senator Jessica Ramos. The Assembly has passed the bill as well, and PEF will be pushing the Governor to sign it. The bill requires public employers to evaluate their workplaces to determine risks for "abusive conduct" and "bullying" and expands existing training requirements on how to identify, prevent, and report workplace bullying and abusive conduct.

"None of this could have ever been gained without your voice and participation," Jackson said to the Executive Board. "(You should) always know that when this chair of the Civil Service and Pensions committee walks into a room, it means that you—the members—are in the room too."



State Senator Robert Jackson and Assemblywoman Stacey Pheffer Amato address the PEF Executive Board on May 30, 2024.



More money available for PS&T members via contract Article 15

Changes to Article 15 of the PEF PS&T contract, which provides reimbursement for workshops and seminars, licensure and certification exam fees, and tuition for college and graduate school classes, will streamline the process and help reduce the time it takes to receive payment.

Members who are interested in taking part in any workshops run by the Public Service Workshops Program should visit the PSWP website at <https://www.pswp.info/> and check the current workshops available.

All applications and supporting documentation must be submitted within 90 calendar days after the end date of the course. The 2024 CTR Program was launched on May 20, 2024. In order to allow sufficient time for submission, any applications for courses or events that began on or after January 1, 2024, and ended prior to May 20, 2024, may be submitted within 90 days after the launch date.

College Tuition Reimbursement (CTR) Program

In 2024, the CTR no longer reimburses on a per credit basis. Instead, members are eligible for up to \$5,000 per calendar year to use toward college courses, regardless of whether they are taking undergraduate or graduate courses. This is significantly more money than was previously available, which was capped annually at \$2,800 for undergraduate course work and \$4,400 for graduate.

Reimbursement is still subject to the requirements of the program, outlined in the guidelines.

Nurses Enhanced College Tuition Reimbursement (NECTR)

The NECTR program will also no longer reimburse nurses on a per credit basis. Instead, nurses currently in a New York State nursing title and matriculated in a nursing program will be eligible for up to \$10,000 per calendar year to use toward college credit courses required by their nursing degree program.

Previously, courses were reimbursed at the same rate as the CTR program, with a maximum reimbursement of \$5,600 for undergraduate and \$8,800 for graduate students.

Certification and License Renewal Fee Reimbursement (CLRFR) Program

The amount PEF PS&T members can be reimbursed for the cost of certification or license renewal required by the State to maintain a member's current employment has increased from \$200 to \$300 per calendar year.





Citing “Unintended Consequences,” Governor Hochul Hits Pause Button on NYC Congestion Pricing Plan

After listening to concerns from various public employee unions, including those raised by PEF President Wayne Spence, Governor Kathy Hochul announced on June 6, 2024, that Manhattan’s congestion pricing program would be put on hold indefinitely. Absent this action, the plan would have taken effect on June 30 and would have cost drivers \$15 per day to enter Manhattan south of 60th street, with commercial vehicles and trucks paying steeper tolls. Citing concerns around various unintended consequences – which would include the significant new out-of-pocket costs for PEF members and other workers who travel into Manhattan for work — Governor Hochul announced the suspension of the program.

“PEF appreciates that Governor Hochul is listening to the concerns of workers with the current congestion pricing plan. We look forward to working with her and city officials to address the unintended consequences of the current plan on PEF members and other workers who travel into Manhattan for work,” said President Spence.

This is a major win for the thousands of PEF members who rely on their own vehicles to get to work in lower Manhattan and who would have seen their commuting costs grow exponentially.

PEF will keep members apprised of developments as they occur.



New Council Leader at OCM seeks to grow member engagement and cannabis awareness

By NAJEE WALKER

On March 31, 2021, the Marijuana Regulation and Taxation Act was signed into law in New York, legalizing the adult, recreational use of marijuana or cannabis. The legislation also created the new Office of Cannabis Management (OCM). Since then, the office has hit the ground running to help create and regulate the market in the state.

Nevillene White is the Manager of Community Relations within the External Affairs department at OCM. She is also now the council leader of Division 412. The staff working at OCM, a brand-new agency, is largely a younger workforce and a workforce new to state work and to unions. White said it is her mission to make sure that everyone who comes on board, regardless of age or state service experience, knows that PEF is here.

“Even before I was made the council leader, I was working with the administration to make sure PEF was being included in onboarding new employees,” said White. “PEF is now put on the schedule for onboarding and I make a point to discuss why it is important to join, become a dues-paying member, and how to work with management.”

White’s background has prepared her for both her role at OCM and her role as council leader. Before joining OCM, White worked for many years at the Department of Health and was a PEF steward for 10 years. Though PEF has been her first and only union for 24 years, White said that she is a “union baby,” born in New York City to parents who were both career city workers.

“I heard union talk all my life,” White said. “Being in a union and joining PEF already felt very familiar to me.”

At OCM, her work is not too different than the work she did as a DOH employee. As a part of external affairs, her work is rooted in equity, community, and education.



Nevillene White is the PEF Council Leader of Division 412

"I get to go into the community to talk about licensing, procedures, and how those who have been disproportionately impacted can build a space in the industry if they wish to," White said. "I'm given the chance to educate about the stigma behind use and sale of cannabis and I'm able to take what questions, concerns and ideas the community has back to the office."

With the agency being so new and with the workforce at OCM seeing more younger staff members, White said it is important to make sure anyone coming into service at OCM knows PEF is there for them.

White said that she wants to prevent issues with new members and management in her division before they arise, but also assure members that the relationship with management does not need to be a combative one.

"I want them to know that we can have a good relationship with management—and we have so far—and maintain a kind of open-door policy with them," she said.

Though some employees are provisional and may be hesitant to come into the fold, White said she still wants to look out for them and bring them in as soon as they are ready.

"I'm still building a team here—I still need a VP, and some other positions filled—but I will take all the help I can get," she said.

Her first goal as a council leader is to drive up member engagement. She has planned the Division's first membership meeting for this month.

White believes in the work being done at OCM and is excited about the office's future. She is also excited about the potential for the staff at OCM to bring quality work to New York and hopefully soon to PEF.

"The impact we will have on peoples' lives and on New York is big. The jobs, the entrepreneurship, the industry—a billion-dollar industry—are all here and happening in New York," she said. "There is a dedicated, brilliant, innovative group of problem solvers here. To see them work has revitalized my love for my work, and I am happy to be part of the foundation and the groundwork for OCM."

White is hopeful that her co-workers will see the passion she has not only for her work, but for being a part of PEF. She also hopes that New Yorkers see the value of the work being done at OCM and by PEF members.

"The people here doing the work are working overtime, working hard and are some of the most dedicated workers I've ever seen," she said. "I hope the public will see the value we bring to New York."



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DOCCS members working to combat fatigue and mental health with fulfillment and wellness

By **NAJEE WALKER**

Vikky Urena and Faith Cochran are both PEF Division 236 DOCCS employees who work in Brooklyn and New Rochelle. Urena is a parole officer and Cochran is a parole revocation specialist. Over the years, both Urena and Cochran have noticed how their work has caused stress and harm, not only to themselves but to their fellow DOCCS coworkers. In 2022, DOCCS worked with Desert Waters Correction Outreach to offer the “Improving the Well Being of Corrections Professionals” (IWCP) course. As part of their participation with a group called One Voice United, Urena and Cochran recognized the benefits of the training and want to see it go further.

Urena is a parole officer and Cochran is a parole revocation specialist. They are based in Brooklyn and New Rochelle.

Over the years, both Urena and Cochran have noticed how their work has caused stress and harm, not only to themselves but to their fellow community supervision co-workers. In 2022, DOCCS worked with Desert Waters Correction Outreach to offer the “Improving the Well Being of Corrections Professionals” (IWCP) course. After receiving that training and seeing the help it can bring, Urena and Cochran want the training to go further.

IWCP is a “train-the-trainer” course that taught DOCCS participants how to better themselves while also teaching them how to impart this knowledge to others, who can then train more people.

“The training we took was only for corrections staff,” said Urena. “We see the same issues affecting corrections staff that are also affecting re-entry staff, senior parole officers and others. These are our workers who are working with people who may be repeat offenders, or who may have committed serious crimes.”

Urena and Cochran found that members and DOCCS employees, including themselves, have dealt with wrongful suspension, injury in the line of duty, heavy workloads and harassment.

“There are employees who have lost their lives indirectly from the stress of the job,” Cochran said.

The team of two are working with Desert Waters and One Voice United—a non-profit focused on the betterment of the corrections profession—as well as with PEF Article 18 Committee and PEF Health and Safety Department to bring a “From Corrections Fatigue to Fulfillment” (CF2F) train-the-trainer course to PEF members. The training will specifically target issues that affect community supervision staff, like parole officers and revocation specialists.

“The training will explore the psychological challenges parole officers face as a result of their jobs,” said Cochran. “It then provides self-care and organizational tools that can be used to combat the stress brought on by the job.”

Urena and Cochran have worked together to create a proposal and are working to have their first course ready by the Fall. The course is designed to be a five-day, 40-hour course. Upon completion, participants will receive certification and become trainers or co-facilitators to train more PEF members.

DOCCS Associate Commissioner James Donahue wrote in support of this training and PEF’s Health and Safety and Article 18 Committee has been working to provide the resources needed to make this training possible. Urena and Cochran both say that what they need most is funding.

“DOCCS management signed on to the idea, Geraldine Stella and the Health & Safety staff have been really helpful,” Urena said. “But we still need funding. We need the Office of Employee Relations (OER) to help.”

Cochran said that the proposal has been submitted to OER and that it details all the potential expenses that may arise, as well as why they believe the training is necessary and a complete program description.

At a recent DOCCS Statewide Labor Management Conference, Urena spoke highly of this program and caught the attention of DOCCS Commissioner Dan Martuscello. The commissioner said that he would work closely with the (OER) to make sure they get the information needed.

“I don’t anticipate any push back,” Cochran said.

“In my discussions with OER, they were very interested in using joint contractual funds for the program,” said PEF Health & Safety Director Geraldine Stella. “And they are working with DOCCS and the Office of Victim Services on processing the application.”

According to Stella, many DOCCS staff, agency directors and supervisors are already interested in the program. The team is optimistic that members will be equally receptive to the training, as DOCCS staff continue to seek ways to cope with the stress of their work.





Labor History: A look back at the formation of USW

By **NAJEE WALKER**

Many of the biggest unions in the United States were formed when the needs of the American workforce were greatest. The Communication Workers of America (CWA), for example, was formed after a strike at AT&T in 1923 failed to yield results and ultimately caused telephone operators at the company to disband their department.

The story behind the formation of the United Steel Workers of America (USW) is not too different.

USW is a combination of two unions — the Amalgamated Association of Iron and Steel Workers (AA) and the Steel Workers Organizing Committee (SWOC).

AA was formed in August 1876. However, the turning point for the union happened when Andrew Carnegie placed notorious anti-unionist Henry Clay Frick in charge of the company's operation in 1881. As the union's contract was set to expire in 1892, Frick demanded a 22% decrease in wages from the union and locked the workers out of the steel mill on June 29, a day before the contract's expiration.

Workers picketed and blocked the mill's entrance in response, and Frick used law enforcement and the Pinkerton Detective Agency to break it up. Eventually the clashes became violent and AA members voted to return to work in November 1892.

The union then saw its membership decline over the next four decades. During that time, the Committee for Industrial Organization (CIO) — which would eventually merge to become the AFL-CIO — sought to unify steel workers and connected with AA to set up the SWOC in June 1936. The SWOC organized workers at several mills over the years, including the Bethlehem Steel mill in New York.

Finally, after a convention held in Cleveland on May 22, 1942, the AA and SWOC disbanded and reformed as a new organization — the United Steel Workers of America.

Today, USW represents steel workers across the U.S. and in Canada. Division 4 is home to local chapters in the Northeast — including New York — and Puerto Rico.

USW has also grown its membership to include more than just steel workers, including the New York State Nurses Association, and of course, staff working at PEF and PEF Membership Benefits.

Today, USW's biggest fight is against the proposed acquisition of U.S. Steel by the Japanese-owned Nippon Steel. USW International President David McCall believes it would harm both workers and the nation.



That's a wrap for first PEF Emerging Leaders Institute

By **KATE STICKLES**

PEF members have upped their leadership skills by participating in the first PEF Leadership Institute, which kicked off in July of last year and wrapped with a final meeting a few weeks ago. As part of the program, each member proposed a project that advanced the strategic interests of PEF and the goals of the union, its members, and the communities they serve.

"Building a strong foundation of leaders is vital to PEF's future," said PEF President Wayne Spence. "Participants of the Leadership Institute worked on projects from how to fill steward vacancies, to creating council leader networking opportunities, to building social engagement among younger members, creating new member orientations, and brainstorming campaigns for Tier 6 pension reform. Congratulations to all the members who participated in the institute and PEF will continue to work with the members as they move forward with their leadership roles in the union."

Participants that attended the final meeting included:

- Alan Fish, an ITS 3 with the Law Department in Region 8
- Sandy Darby-Roberts, a labor services representative with the Department of Labor in Brooklyn
- Dr. Wanda Bates, a psychologist at Fishkill Correctional Facility
- Jacob Daly-Engel, an education trainee for the State Education Department in Region 8
- Haris Ismail, a senior transportation analyst with the Department of Transportation in Region 1

- Alison Rissing, a parole officer in White Plains
- Blessing Ijeoma, an RN2 at Brooklyn Developmental Disabilities Services Office
- Michelle Rosello, a social worker 2 at Creedmore Psychiatric Center
- Mickey Dobbin, a research collections technician at the State Education Department in Region 8
- Ivan Giannou, an RN 2 at Pilgram Psychiatric Center
- Brian Silva, an investigative officer with the Department of Labor in Region 8

The mission of the PEF Leadership Institute is to not only help build upon the skills of PEF's current leaders, but to develop the skills of new ones. It recognizes the strength that comes from having leaders of all age groups and generations. Learn more about the institute [here](#).



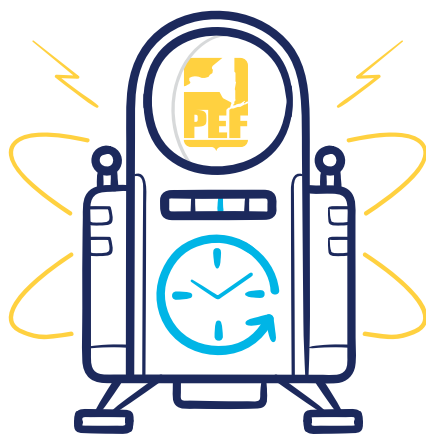
PEF President Spence presented certificates to the inaugural class of the PEF Emerging Leaders Institute. From top left, clockwise: Alan Fish, Alison Rissing, Blessing Ijeoma, Brian Silva, Haris Ismail, Michele Rosello, Mickey Dobbin, Wanda Bates, Sandy Darby-Roberts, Jacob Daly-Engel, and Ivan Giannou.



Are you interested in a career with PEF?

The New York State Public Employees Federation (PEF) is a diverse and powerful labor union committed to creating a better working life for its members. PEF staff work in various departments in collaboration with PEF's elected union leadership to serve 50,000 members employed in professional, scientific, and technical titles across the State. Some of PEF's departments include: Communications, Contract Administration, Field Services, Finance, Health & Safety, Legal, Legislative and Organizing. If you believe in workers' rights, justice and equality, then a career in the labor movement may be right for you. To see what opportunities are available at PEF, please visit our [Careers Page](#).

www.pef.org/careers-at-pef



Blast from the Past: PEF wins access to DOL employee- injury records

By **KATE STICKLES**

In 2001, the state Supreme Court ruled that the Department of Labor broke state law when it withheld information about employees' job-related injuries from PEF. The union sued after the state's Industrial Board of Appeals upheld DOL's decision to deny PEF full information provided on injury and illness logs.

The story began with DOL's Statewide Health and Safety Committee's request to review the records: "I wanted to see how many injuries were happening and how they happened, and how much time on the job was being lost because of them," then committee co-chair Ron Goldstein stated in a July/August 2001 Communicator article. "All we want to do, is save the employees' pain and injury and save the department money."

Fast forward to 2024

Those logs are vital tools to address health and safety concerns in the workplace and PEF uses them today in efforts to rectify problems. PEF will go to bat to make sure these logs are made available when requested.

At a Health and Safety workshop at last year's PEF Convention, members discussed analyzing data to identify workplace violence trends. This is where a worksite's SH 900 logs can be leveraged. An employer is required by state law to keep an SH 900 log of all work-related injuries and illnesses and PEF has a right to request them and there is no need to state a reason for the request.

[Click here for PEF's Health and Safety webpage.](#)



Watch for these labor events coming up

By SHERRY HALBROOK

Lots of labor events are coming up this summer and fall that may interest you and your family.

Labor Day events will be held not just on Monday, Sept. 3, but throughout that month at various locations in the state.

Celebrate labor

In Albany, for instance, festivities are planned for Saturday, Sept. 22, when the city will host the "2001 NYS Capital Labor Parade. This event has been growing by leaps and bounds in recent years, and PEF members have marched proudly with their families in a warm celebration of their pride in providing professional public services to all New Yorkers.

Contact your PEF field office for more information about how you can participate in this event or the Labor Day celebration in your community.

Voice of the future

The New York Labor-Religion Coalition will hold a statewide conference in Albany October 14-15.

"Speaking Out for Justice" is the theme of this year's conference, which will feature the unique role of youth in the movement for social justice.

Young people throughout the state and America are becoming increasingly active and vocal on many important issues, including child labor, human rights and the environment.

This conference aims at building strong cross-generational ties among these young people and more experienced activists.

AFL-CIO Secretary-Treasurer Richard Trumka will speak at this event, which will also include comments from young people who have been part of delegations to Mexican communities where US industries have relocated.

For more information about this event, call 518-459-5400, ext. 6294 or e-mail the coalition at info@labor-religion.org.

Court orders DOL to give PEF complete information

PEF wins access to DOL employee-injury records

By SHERRY HALBROOK

The state Supreme Court has ruled the state Department of Labor (DOL) broke state law when it withheld from PEF information about employees' job-related injuries.

"This decision is a victory for basic worker rights that will benefit all public employees in New York state," said PEF President Roger Benson.

PEF sued the DOL in April after the state's Industrial Board of Appeals (IBA) upheld the Labor Department's right to deny the union the full information provided in the injury and illness logs.

"It was outrageous for the Labor Department, which is responsible for enforcing the state's Public Employee Safety and Health Act (PESH) to violate its own employees' rights under that law," Benson said.

Key to injury prevention

PEF Executive Board Member Ron Goldstein, co-chair of the DOL Statewide Health and Safety Committee, requested the records so they could be reviewed by the committee.

"I wanted to see how many injuries were happening and how they happened, and how much time on the job was being lost because of them," Goldstein said. "I hoped that we could set goals for reducing them. But how can you tell if there's a pattern of similar injuries, if you can't tell who was hurt, what they were doing or how it happened?"

"All we want to do, is save the employees' pain and injury and save the department money," he said.

But so much information was eliminated from the records provided by DOL, that the committee "has no way



GOLDSTEIN

to know if people are tripping on electrical cords, tipping over file cabinets by opening too many drawers at the same time, or slipping on ice in a parking lot," Goldstein said.

Judge: DOL unpersuasive

In his decision, Justice Anthony Kane of the state Supreme Court, Albany County, said, "... In essence, the DOL, in redacting the [employees' names and job titles] from the logs, is frustrating the underlying purpose for

which the logs are maintained, to wit, to protect the health and safety interests of public employees, and renders access to such logs practically meaningless."

Kane ruled the DOL was arbitrary and capricious in denying full access to the records and said "... the IBA's determination to affirm the DOL's discretion in determining that an unwarranted invasion of personal privacy would exist if the identity of the employees contained in the forms were disclosed is not warranted by the record, has no reasonable basis, was contrary to the PESH Act, constitutes an erroneous interpretation of law and it is hereby annulled."

Kane said he found it "significant" that other state departments, such as the Department of Correctional Services and the Office of Mental Health have provided full access to their employee injury logs when requested.

"I want to thank PEF staff for their efforts," Goldstein said. "We never could have come this far without the technical expertise of PEF's Safety and Health Department and the legal skills of its Office of General Counsel," he said. "They deserve a lot of the credit for this victory."



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PEF and fellow unions representing healthcare workers at hospitals across the state descended on the Capitol in Albany on May 13 to call for immediate action on safe staffing.

Multi-union rally demands safe staffing in healthcare settings

By **KATE STICKLES**

“What do we want? Safe staffing! When do we want it? Now!”

Health care workers from multiple unions made sure the halls of the State Capitol echoed with that message during a rally May 13, demanding swift action from the State and the Department of Health to address New York’s healthcare crisis by enforcing the 2021 Clinical Staff Committee Law.

“The state must do its job!” said PEF Vice President Randi DiAntonio to the pumped-up crowd. “We are here today because the Clinical Staffing Committees look good on paper, but so far they haven’t moved the needle for nurses or patients.”

Since the law went into effect in January 2023, there have been thousands of unresolved complaints filed on behalf of workers by their unions, including PEF, Communications Workers of American District 1, New York State Nurses Association, 1199SEIU United Healthcare Workers East, District Council 37, New York State United Teachers, United Federation of Teachers, and the New York State AFL-CIO.

“There are no substantial consequences for violations of unsafe staffing,” VP DiAntonio said. “Nothing requires employers to listen to nursing in developing the staffing plans. Nurses are reporting concerns about patient safety, but the problem remains. We need our hospitals to prioritize safe staffing and good patient outcomes.”



Vice President Randi DiAntonio takes the podium representing the interests of PEF members at the rally.

In addition to demanding hospitals follow the law, PEF is also calling for an expansion to other state agencies employing healthcare workers, like DOCCS, OMH, OPWDD, and OCFS.

Workers were joined in their call for immediate action by Assemblymembers Amy Paulin and Harry Bronson, and State Sen. Gustavo Rivera.



PEF President Spence honored in City & State's Albany Power 100



PEF President Wayne Spence was highlighted this month as part of City & State magazine's Albany Power 100. He shares the honor with 99 other powerful leaders in New York State, including the Top 5: Governor Kathy Hochul, State Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins, Assembly Speaker Carl Heastie, State Attorney General Letitia James and State Senate Deputy Majority Leader Michael Gianaris. Congratulations, President Spence on this recognition by City & State for the work you do on behalf of PEF members across the State!

Read President Spence's entry and check out the full list, [here](#).



Contributed by Morgan Davidson

PEF, CSEA members uniquely serve their community

By **KATE STICKLES**

Union members serve their communities. Union members serve people. Union members serve – cats?

A team of CSEA and PEF members at Elmira Psychiatric Center have banded together to rescue stray cats around their work location, feeding, trapping, and spaying and neutering them with assistance from the Chemung County SPCA.

Morgan Davidson, who is in graduate school to become a social worker and is aiming to become a PEF member upon completion; Chris Boughton, a registered nurse; and Catherine Shea, a psychiatric nurse practitioner, are working to save these often-abandoned animals.

"I took this on mostly because I know that these cats are often out here due to people who have abandoned them after moving or they decide they don't want the responsibility," Davidson said on behalf of the trio. "Based on the behavior of some of these cats, I know they are stray cats, not ferals. Once upon a time they had a home and now they are living on the streets."

The group works with the SPCA's community cat program for the spaying and neutering, removing the burden of paying for the surgeries out of their own pockets. So far they've assisted 11 felines either find new homes or get the veterinary care they need.

Emergency needs, however, are on the team.

"I had one sick kitten since I began this process and I did have to pay money out-of-pocket for his vet bill, and in the end, he sadly did not make it," Davidson said.

Recently, they rescued a mother cat who had given birth inside the Elmira Correctional Facility.

"At first I went to get the kittens because I was under the impression the mama had gotten spooked and ran off," she said. The mother came back, and she was able to trap her and remove her and her three kittens. They will go to the SPCA when they turn eight weeks old.

Davidson, Shea, and Boughton have a message for pet owners and lovers: "It's important to get your animals spayed and neutered so they don't repopulate unplanned," they said. "Supporting local animal shelters is extremely important because they do so much for these animals in our communities."



Joint Affirmative Action Committee partners with consultant to get results on discrimination

By **NAJEE WALKER**

PEF members may not be aware that when they face discrimination in the workplace, there are avenues that they can take to find justice and protection. One of the ways PEF members can get the support they need is from PEF's Joint Affirmative Action Advisory Committee (JAAAC).

Article 36 of the PEF Contract provides a joint state and PEF committee that "shall develop appropriate recommendations on matters of mutual interest in the area of Equal Employment and Affirmative Action."

Employment discrimination comes in many forms and is based on protected classes, like race, gender, sexual orientation, and age.

To help deal with cases of discrimination when they arise, PEF works with Eric Josey, a retired New York City Police Officer and Employment Discrimination Specialist who now works as a consultant. Josey got his start while working as an officer, when he helped a fellow officer get her job back after she was wrongfully terminated.

Josey worked with PEF members — especially members at the Department of Corrections and Community Supervision (DOCCS) — to resolve discrimination cases for many years.

When the committee needed to hire a consultant, they at first sought the help of attorneys to bolster the committee's abilities. However, Josey answered the Request for Proposal sent by PEF and was officially hired in 2020 and has been working with the committee since.

"PEF is the only union that has been taking a strong role against employment discrimination, the only union that has a plan to deal with employment discrimination," said Josey. "And I am happy to lend my services and support to PEF members."

PEF Executive Board Member and assistant chair of the JAAAC Tamara Martin agrees with Josey. Other unions, according to Martin, are not taking on the fight against discrimination for their members the way PEF is.

"I'm glad that we are able to do this for our members," said Martin. "I think it is really important to stand up for our members and fight for our members whenever possible. For us to be able to help them speaks to who we are as a union and to the leadership of President Spence."



The committee has been pleased with Josey's work and the time he takes to make sure members have a resource when faced with employment discrimination.

"Eric does a lot of work with the committee and for our members, we ask a lot of him," said Martin. "But he answered the call, and he has a good track record."

PEF Retiree Charles Roland is also a member of the JAAAC. He said that Josey's work has breathed life back into the committee. Thanks to Josey, the committee has a resource to understand policies, laws and the intricacies of complaints.

"He has been an essential part of this committee and delivers clear, concise opinions," said Roland. "It is due to his involvement and knowledge that we are now a fully active and relevant committee."

Employment discrimination is a difficult topic, and most people do not know or recognize it when it happens. However, Josey says, many employees do experience it in the workplace.

"A lot of the time, there is often one person at a location with a long history of tolerated behavior," he said.



While bullying may not always fall into employment discrimination, the two can be related if the bullying falls into a protected class. Sexual harassment can also be a form of employment discrimination.

"I'd say about 8 times out of 10, we see bullying as part of employment discrimination," said Josey.

Whenever possible, Josey recommends that members should try to resolve the issue on their own before reaching out. Once they reach out, Josey said: "It is going to get worse before it gets better."

When tackling employment discrimination cases, the focus is typically on "probable cause." If an employee feels that they have been discriminated against and a complaint is filed, the State Division of Human Rights and the United States Equal Employment Opportunity Commission both must see if the complaint meets the threshold for probable cause. If there is a case, then it leads to a public hearing or lawsuit.

"Most cases are settled before a public hearing of probable cause is found," Josey said.

The process for PEF members begins with field representatives. If a member feels that they have been discriminated against at their workplace or agency, they should first contact their field representative. If they don't know who that is, [call your PEF regional office](#) and you'll be directed to them. From there, a complaint form is filled out and given to Josey, who reviews it and writes a consultation report.

For members who feel they have a case, it is important to gather supporting documents to build a case. Some employees wait to file their cases and often exceed the statute of limitations. In New York State, that time limit is one year. At the federal level, it is 300 days.

Since Josey has been consulting with PEF, there has been a significant increase of probable cause findings of discrimination after an investigation by the New York State Division of Human Rights.

Martin, Roland and Josey are hopeful that members who are experiencing discrimination will take advantage of the services the committee offers and Josey's expertise.

[Click for a brochure about the JAAAC](#)

[Explore your 3 options for filing a complaint](#)

[Fill out the PEF intake form to make the JAAAC aware of your case](#)



Recommit Today!

New + Existing PEF Members

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Looking for college scholarships? PEF and Union Plus have options for you!

By **KATE STICKLES**

Do you have a college-bound student this year? They might be able to apply for several [scholarships offered by PEF](#) or other union organizations.

The cost of college is daunting and sometimes even prohibitive.

Full-time resident students at public four-year colleges spend an average of \$24,840 per academic year, while non-resident students spend an average of \$46,730. Those attending private nonprofit four-year institutions pay even more: an average of \$60,420 per academic year, according to Bankrate.

A few options, for specific PEF Regions and Divisions:

PEF Region 1: Region 1 is offering legal dependents of active Region 1 members the opportunity to win four \$500 scholarships in honor of Judi Scanlon. [Click here](#) for the application form and eligibility requirements. Winner will be determined by a random drawing of those who complete all requirements. Applicants cannot have won in the past four years. Mail your application (must be postmarked by no later than June 14, 2024) to: PEF Region 1 Coordinator Michele Iorfida, PEF Region 1 Office, 4950 Genesee Street, Ste. 150, Cheektowaga, NY 14225.

PEF Division 240: Division 240 is conducting its annual Prashant "Pete" Singapura College Scholarship Contest, with up to nine scholarships awarded (two for \$1,000; one for \$500; three for \$350; and three for \$150). Eligibility requirements include: applicant must be a PEF member of Division 240 or their dependent or their immediate family member (Mother, Father, Son, Daughter, Spouse

or Domestic Partner) OR applicant must provide proof of fulltime or parttime enrollment at an accredited college or university for spring 2024, or a college acceptance letter for fall 2024 to an accredited college or university. Click [here](#) for the application and [here](#) for the informational flyer. Deadline is July 19, 2024.

Check with your PEF Council Leader or [Regional Coordinator](#) for information on local scholarships in your area.

Division 343: The Division is conducting its first Annual College Scholarship Contest and will be awarding one \$1,000 scholarship to the winner.

Applicants must be the child and/or family member of a PEF Division 343 member and be a high school graduate or soon-to-be graduate who is enrolled in an accredited New York state college for the fall of 2024 term as a freshman.

Fill out the form [here](#) and email it to Division Secretary Christine Thompson at Namena@yahoo.com and cc: Steward Kathleen Pepper at RSC90@aol.com, along with the typewritten essay and proof of enrollment. Include PEF Division 343 Scholarship Fall 2024 in the subject line.

Application deadline is July 5, 2024. The winner will be announced July 19, 2024.

Prepare for the next round of Union Plus scholarships

While the deadline for this school year has passed, applications for the 2025 Union Plus Scholarship Program will be available in mid-June and it can't hurt to get an early start on the process.

Since 1991, the program has awarded more than \$5.4 million to students of working families who want to begin or continue their post-secondary education, helping more than 3,800 families.

Eligibility: Current and retired members of participating unions, their spouses and their dependent children (as defined by IRS regulations). At least one year of continuous union membership by the applicant, applicant's spouse or parent (if applicant is a dependent). The one-year membership minimum must be satisfied by May 31 of the scholarship year.

Applicants are evaluated according to academic ability, social awareness, financial need and appreciation of labor. A GPA of 3.0 or higher is recommended. The required essays can account for up to half your total score. Scholarship applicants are judged by a committee of impartial post-secondary educators.

Amounts range from \$500 to \$4,000.

Other PEF scholarships

Make sure you take note of deadlines and applications for other PEF scholarships, such as the Joseph Scacalossi and the Judi Scanlon scholarships, which are complete for this year, but will be available again for 2025. All scholarship information can be found on the PEF [website](#).



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Healthcare worker scholarship targets underserved areas of NY; application deadline is June 24

If you plan to pursue work as a registered nurse, respiratory therapist, clinical laboratory technologist, radiologic technologist, or surgical technologist, and you agree to work in an underserved area of New York for two years upon graduation – the NYS Healthcare Workers for Our Future Scholarship Program is for you.

The program provides a two-year scholarship to approximately 500 selected recipients covering tuition, room and board, and other related expenses in an approved program of study at any [approved New York state public or private college or university](#).

“The Healthcare Workers for Our Future scholarship represents not only New York state’s continuing commitment to our students’ education in critical fields but also Governor Hochul’s commitment to fostering a robust healthcare system in New York that is both resilient and equitable,” New York State Higher Education Services

Corporation President Dr. Guillermo Linares said. “This scholarship supports our students’ educational journeys by providing financial assistance and empowering them to make a difference in communities where the scarcity of healthcare services is most prevalent.”

To enter the Healthcare Workers for Our Future Scholarship drawing, participants can complete an [online entry form](#). Recipients of the scholarship must agree to work in an [underserved area in NYS](#). For the scholarship application, complete program rules and FAQs, visit ny.gov/healthcareworkers. The deadline to apply is June 24, 2024.



PEF in the News



S-T Donahue represents PEF

New York state lawmakers, local officials promote bill to protect road workers: PEF has backed a bill sponsored by State Sen. Jeremy Cooney. The bill would protect high workers, motor carrier investigators, and motor carrier inspectors by making assault against these workers a Class D felony. PEF Secretary Treasurer Joe Donahue attended a press conference on June 3, representing the 3,300 Department of Transportation PEF members, in support of the legislation. "New York State cannot sit by and allow assaults on high workers, motor carrier investigators, and motor carrier inspectors. They should not be treated differently than other assaults," said Donahue.

[Click here for the story.](#)

Region 8 RC speaks at press conference

PEF supports creating preceptorship programs to match trained, experienced clinicians with students to provide intense first-hand training to help bridge the gap between classroom education and clinical hands-on training. Region 8 Coordinator Danielle Bridger attended State Sen. Jake Ashby's press conference May 31 at the Samaritan Hospital School of Nursing and multiple news organizations covered the event, including:



[Bill would provide stipend for New York clinicians to mentor others](#)



[Proposed legislation could support healthcare workers in New York](#)



[State bill to support health care mentor stipends backed](#)



Members need your leave donations

The following PEF members have reported a need for leave donations due to the need for medical treatment or recuperation from illness or injury. Donations are made from annual leave and donors must retain at least 10 days of annual leave after donating. To donate leave, obtain a leave-donation form from your personnel or human resources office and submit it to that office. You may donate leave to employees at both the agency where you work and to those working at other state agencies.

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

Barbara Bertucio is a curatorial visitor services specialist 1 at the Office of General Services in Albany.

Cassandra Bradford is a registered nurse 2 at SUNY Upstate Medical Center in Syracuse.

Kevin Bromley is a registered nurse 1 with the Office of People with Developmental Disabilities in Norwood.

Rhonda Carroll-Eldridge is a dairy products specialist 1 at the Department of Agriculture and Markets in Steuben County.

Brian Cellery is an information technology specialist 3 at the Office of Information Technology Services in Albany.

Kimberly Ernst-Harris is a supervising offender rehabilitation coordinator at the state Department of Corrections and Community Supervision central office in Albany.

Heather Farthing is a registered nurse 2 at Capital District Psychiatric Center in Albany.

Sally Fontana is social work supervisor 1, LCSW at Mohawk Valley Psychiatric Center in Utica.

Cherie Griffin is a taxpayer services specialist 2 at the state Department of Taxation and Finance in Albany.

Rishona Haynes is a registered nurse 1 at SUNY Stony Brook on Long Island.

Ann Krenn is an Offender Rehabilitation Coordinator at Groveland Correctional Facility in Sonyea.

Roxeen Mundy is an information technology specialist 2 at the state Office of Information Technology Services in Albany.

Rose Niang is an investigative specialist 1 at the Department of Education in Manhattan.

Darlene (Gemma) Rose is an employment counselor for the state Labor Department in Amsterdam,.

Vexilla Quinlan is a registered nurse 1 at Bronx Psychiatric Center in the Bronx.

Vicki Sweet is a business systems analyst at the Worker's Compensation Board in Menands.

Christine Ward is a senior Worker's Compensation Examiner at the Worker's Compensation Board in Menands.

Jennifer Wells is a registered nurse 2 at SUNY Upstate in Syracuse.

Roslyn Williams is an economic development program specialist 2 at the Department of Agriculture and Markets in Albany.



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 174 and 175 of the [2023-26 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 communicator@pef.org, or call 518-785-1900.





May 16, 2024

PEF staff participated in the 2024 CDPHP Workforce Team Challenge May 16, joining more than 8,300 registered participants. Collectively, the event donated nearly \$20,000 to the 2024 Charities of Choice: Wizard's Wardrobe and Reeling for Recovery. The 2024 PEF team included, from left to right, Ed Aluck, Scott Harms, Rob Merrill, John Svare, Chris Allen, Veronica Foley, Todd Kerner, Kristie Furman, Russ Kuon, Paige Saakyan, Tara Bentley, Geraldine Stella, Tammy Carney, and Marci Chadwick. Not pictured, Gabrielle Groves, Caitlin Janiszewski, and Heather Pollock.



May 19, 2024

Pennsylvania could feel the energy from downtown Philadelphia today! Mary Kay Henry, who recently stepped down after 14 years as president of the Service Employees International Union, one of the nation's largest and most politically powerful labor unions, helped lead more than 3,000 workers through the streets at the Unions for All March in Philadelphia to demand new rules and higher standards for workers in all industries. Pictured is PEF Trustee Muriel Hardy-Lee.



May 10, 2024

PEF Division 198 at SUNY Downstate celebrated Nurses Appreciation Week by honoring nurses who have gone above and beyond in their career. There award presentations and recognition of Adebayo Akingba, who recently passed away. She was remembered for her hard work and dedication to her job as a nurse, and for being an all-around wonderful person.



May 9, 2024

PEF Division 207 at the Bernard Fineson DDSO celebrated Nurses Week with an appreciation event on May 8 in Queens



June 6, 2024

State Comptroller Tom DiNapoli (middle, in suit) welcomed PEF leaders and members to a Manhattan event on June 6, 2024. Left to right: Region 10 Coordinator Radhakrishna Mohan, Region 11 Secretary Treasurer Charles Roland, PEF Political Director Leah Gonzalez, PEF Council Leader Indermattie Balkaran (Queens Children) and her spouse Kuldip Balkaran, PEF Region 11 Coordinator Bernadette O'Connor, and Region 11 Retiree and PAC member Nithia Chatterjie.

May 31, 2024

Vice President Darlene Williams was presented with a plaque for her inclusion in City & State's 2024 Above & Beyond: Women list. The awards highlight 50 remarkable individuals, including outstanding public servants, executives, advocates, organizers, innovators and more whose accomplishments merit recognition. [Click here for the story.](#)



May 22, 2024

Retirees from Region 2 met for a lunch meeting at Ginny Lee Cafe overlooking Seneca Lake with Retiree President Jim Carr in attendance.



June 3, 2024

PEF Secretary-Treasurer Joe Donahue spoke at a press conference outside the Albany Housing Authority in support of a bill introduced by Senator Jeremy Cooney to protect highway workers and PEF's 3,300 DOT members. The bill makes attacking highway workers, motor carrier investigators, and motor vehicle inspectors assault in the second degree.



June 4, 2024

PEF had the pleasure of attending an event for PEF-endorsed Brooklyn Assemblymember Stefani Zinerman, with NYS AG Tish James and U.S. House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries also in attendance.





May 31, 2024

Outgoing Executive Board members were recognized at the May 30-31, 2024, meeting in Albany. Pictured are Christopher Ford, ITS; Patricia O'Toole, Helen Hayes Hospital; Mariea Young, Criminal Justice Services State Police; James Desso, ITS; Kenneth Ferro, DOH; Stephen Powers, Department of Public Service; Paul Gendron, DOT; and Christopher Buman, PEF Trustee from Tax and Finance . Not pictured are Matthew Fagan, Department of Financial Services; Diane Jaulus, Region 9 Coordinator from DOCCS; Matthew Wisnowski, SUNY Upstate; Robert Doran, OFC Medicaid Inspector General; Janette Clark, OPWDD; Kenneth Dischel, OMH; Patricia Trowbridge, OPWDD; William Cruz, OASAS; James Reppert, Department of State; Scott Wendt, DOT; and William Holthausen, Region 12 Coordinator from DOT.

