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The COMMUNICATOR

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Unified for a
Fair Contract!

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The President's Message By WAYNE SPENCE



Unified for a Fair Contract!

The PEF Contract Team, led by Vice President and Chair Darlene Williams, met with the Office of Employee Relations for the first time on February 2, launching negotiations for the PS&T unit's next contract and presenting a full set of proposals to the State so we can get right down to business.

We all know times are tough, but our team has trained hard, is well-versed in negotiating tactics, and is more than ready for the challenges ahead. I have full confidence in their ability to secure the best deal possible and have advised them to keep members informed without negotiating in public. We will post any updates on the [Contract page](#) of our website, and link to it from all the union's social media platforms, where we will also inform you of solidarity actions you can take to support the Contract Team as negotiations continue.

On January 15, PEF stood with one of our own at the [sentencing hearing of Calvin Haskins](#), the Buffalo Psychiatric Center (BPC) patient who stabbed PEF member Edward Gordon and two other BPC staff members in April 2024. Haskins was sentenced to the maximum of 20 years, concurrently, on attempted murder and assault charges. For staff at BPC, this ends the criminal chapter of the case, but workplace safety concerns persist. Public Employee Safety and Health (PESH) reports identified five "serious violations" at BPC that need to be addressed, and we now await a plan of action from the Office of Mental Health (OMH) to rectify those issues. My thanks to Region 1 Coordinator Vincent Cicatello and BPC Council Leader Alexandre Donascimento for keeping the pressure on OMH.

Also in Western New York, we spoke to a PEF member at Roswell Park Comprehensive Cancer Center who played a role in clinical trials that led [to FDA approval of a pill to treat a specific form of leukemia](#), giving patients new hope for recovery. Our members do amazing research in a wide range of areas, at Roswell and at other health laboratories across the state.

This issue also features SUNY Downstate nurse Joan Rosegreen, who was in Jamaica when Hurricane Melissa slammed into the island nation in late October. Despite challenges she is facing from that traumatic experience, she is doing [amazing and important work as part of the recovery efforts](#). Hats off to Joan for her determination and willingness to help others.

And hats off to all of you as well, for delivering quality public services to New Yorkers despite challenges you face on the job. Your union remains committed to enforcing and improving the terms and conditions of your employment, and keeping you safe at work.

In Unity,

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

Wayne Spence
PEF President

Contract team encouraged after first meeting with the State

By **NAJEE WALKER**

One of the most important functions of any labor union is the ability to negotiate a fair, quality contract. The current Collective Bargaining Agreement for the Professional, Scientific and Technical (PS&T) unit of PEF expires on April 2, 2026. PEF informed the State it was ready to begin bargaining last Fall; however, the State—citing turbulence from federal funding cuts—did not agree to a first meeting until earlier this year. The two sides sat across the table from each other for the first time on Feb. 2.

PEF Vice President Darlene Williams is once again serving as Contract Chair. She said that typical first meetings are introductory, but with an experienced team this time around, the union was able to immediately put its proposals on the table.

“I am so glad to have been able to get our proposals delivered on the first day,” she said. “I really think that it speaks to a good start to our negotiations.”

PEF’s proposals are focused on confronting the affordability crisis in New York State. PEF members are doing more than ever on the job, and they deserve the respect of a wage that keeps pace with the cost of living.

While PEF’s Contract Team consists of 14 people (members plus staff), Chief Negotiator Mark Richard said that he was proud of the team’s ability to carry the voice of 56,000 members on the first day.

“Your concerns, your issues, all of the things you’ve raised to your union were brought forth by an incredible bargaining team,” said Richard. “We put forth a lot of ideas, a lot of concepts, that came from the surveys and worksites. They heard us.”

While Richard stressed that this is only the beginning and that the state’s response to proposals from PEF were not immediately met with substance, this is still an important first step.

Contract Team member Christopher Ford is a Council Leader for Division 357 at the Office of Information Technology Services. He believes that the state knows PEF is serious about getting a fair contract as quickly as possible for the membership and feels emboldened by the first steps taken on February 2.



“Mark is quite correct, the voices of 56,000 members were in this room, and it was seen in the content of the proposals that we passed,” said Ford.

PEF President Wayne Spence was also in the room for the start of negotiations. Richard said that even at this early stage of negotiations, Spence commanded the attention of the state.

“When President Spence spoke, you could have heard a pin drop,” said Richard. “He delivered with passion and high IQ the message from the very deserving workforce.”

The next bargaining session is scheduled for Feb. 18.



Department of
Civil Service

NY HELPS

PEF opposes Civil Service plan to make 40 more titles eligible for NY HELPS

On January 14, the Civil Service Commission approved a request from the Department of Civil Service to move 40 additional titles to the non-competitive jurisdictional class, including 28 within the PS&T bargaining unit, in order to include them in the New York Hiring for Emergency Placement Statewide (NY HELPS) program. Prior to this approval, seven of these titles were updated on the website of the Career Mobility Office to indicate they are NY HELPS titles. This is normally done once the rule is formally adopted pursuant to the State Administrative Procedure Act.

On January 6, the union submitted comments to the Civil Service Commission ahead of the January 14 meeting to approve amendments to the Civil Service Appendices to add the 40 titles, asking the Commission to carefully consider the long-term consequences of continued reliance on what was intended to be a temporary response to an unprecedented workforce shortage.

"With NY HELPS set to expire in June, the focus should be on strengthening the civil service system by ramping up examinations and opening the long-promised computer-based testing centers—not expanding stopgap measures that bypass the merit and fitness system," said President Spence. "That system is a cornerstone of public service and exists to ensure the most qualified candidates are hired to serve New Yorkers.

"Our members report real and lasting repercussions from hiring through NY HELPS," he said. "It undermines career mobility and promotional opportunities for dedicated public servants, and when competitive examinations are removed, the risk of hiring bias and cronyism increases."

PEF specifically called out the proposed inclusion of several parole office titles in this round of NY HELPS additions. Open-competitive exams for these titles were last held in 2017, and there are no available lists to canvas.

"With Less is More and the wildcat strikes at the Department of Corrections and Community Supervision, parole officers are facing exponential increases in workload without any improvements in compensation," said President Spence. "Making these titles NY HELPS will not improve retention and it will not relieve the burden on already overworked and underpaid officers. The state needs to stop circumventing merit and fitness and effect meaningful change in the Civil Service system to achieve these goals."

Patient who stabbed 3 at Buffalo Psychiatric Center in April 2024 sentenced

By NAJEE WALKER

On April 3, 2024, during a relatively normal day at Buffalo Psychiatric Center, three staff members—including one PEF member—were stabbed multiple times in an apparent premeditated and unprovoked attack by a patient. Staff members were attending to 34-year-old Calvin Haskins when he pulled knives hidden on his person to use in the attack.

PEF member Edward Gordon was among the victims. He suffered stab wounds to his abdomen, back and neck.

In the immediate hours after the attack, former PEF Region 1 Coordinator Michele Iorfida, then Buffalo PC Council Leader Vincent Cicatello (now Region 1 Coordinator), PEF President Wayne Spence and other union leaders visited Gordon in the hospital and met with PEF members at the center.

Haskins was arrested and arraigned on three counts of Assault in the First Degree and one count of Criminal Possession of a weapon in the Fourth Degree. That later changed in November 2025 when Haskins pled guilty to two counts of Attempted Murder in the Second Degree and one count of Assault in the Second Degree.

At his sentencing hearing on Jan. 15, Haskins was given 20 years each for the Attempted Murder charges and seven years for the Assault charge. The charges will run concurrently, meaning Haskins will serve a maximum of 20 years in prison. He was also sentenced to five years of probation following his prison sentence.

Victims were given a chance to provide impact statements.

"This crime has impacted many aspects of my life. From getting out of bed to just trusting and believing in others," said Gordon. "It's robbed me of my optimism and the hope that I once so strongly cherished."

Cicatello and Council Leader for Division 180 Dr. Alexandre Donascimento attended the hearing along with several PEF and CSEA members, the victims and their families. Cicatello said that while he believes the length of the sentence should be higher, he is happy with the outcome because the families are satisfied.

"The families feel like there is a sense of justice that he will be receiving the maximum sentence," said Cicatello. "I am glad to see the result as long as the families feel that justice is served."

Dr. Donascimento said that the incident has been top of mind for staff at Buffalo PC for almost two years and that while there is a sense of closure and justice, there is still more to be done.

"Buffalo Psychiatric Center has not forgotten the violence of that day, and this was evident from the packed courtroom as this community showed up to support and listen to the victims' impact statements describing their ongoing physical and psychological recovery," said Dr. Donascimento.

Following the incident, the Public Employee Safety and Health (PESH) Bureau conducted an inspection and investigation of Buffalo PC. On March 7, 2025, PESH delivered their findings to both the members at Buffalo PC and the Office of Mental Health (OMH). According to PESH, Buffalo PC had several violations and could be deemed responsible for a "willful serious violation." Later, in October 2025, Buffalo Psychiatric underwent another investigation due to a lack of protection against patients carrying weapons into the facility. Following that investigation, at a meeting on January 15, 2026—the same day as Calvin Haskins' sentencing hearing—PESH reversed the willful serious violation designation but still held OMH and Buffalo PC to five "serious violations."

It is unclear why PESH reversed their earlier finding, and PEF is meeting with them this month to get some answers. While Council Leader Donascimento was disappointed with the change, he is now looking to OMH to see what comes next.

"The facility was still cited for five serious violations," said Donascimento. "OMH will need to have an approved plan to address them."

The silver lining, said Donascimento, is that the serious violation designation means systemic improvements are now expected of OMH that should make Buffalo PC and all state-run Psychiatric Centers, safer to prevent incidents like the one on April 3, 2024.

"We know that violence should not be 'part of the job' when working in mental healthcare," said Donascimento. "That's what PEF's ['Working for New York State Shouldn't Hurt Campaign'](#) is all about. Our work, however, is ongoing and we will always be ready to advocate for our members and colleagues, who deserve a safer workplace."



<https://bit.ly/3YStRyn>



PEF members on the frontlines of clinical study for new leukemia drug at Roswell Park

By KATE STICKLES

Physicians and PEF members at Roswell Park Comprehensive Cancer Center in Buffalo are at the forefront of research into treatment options for patients with NPM1-mutated acute myeloid leukemia (AML) and recently achieved an important Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approval for a pill treatment.

NPM1-mutated AML is a blood and bone marrow cancer where a change in the genetic material within the NPM1 gene causes the bone marrow to produce white blood cells too quickly. Because of this, the bone marrow can't produce enough red blood cells and platelets.

"I am proud to say that Roswell Park patients were the first in the world to be treated with ziftomenib, and we are continuing to advance the development of this drug for AML patients with clinical trials -- investigating this agent in combination with chemotherapy in the newly diagnosed and relapsed/refractory setting," says Eunice Wang, MD, Chief of Leukemia at Roswell Park Comprehensive Cancer Center, a former PEF member from her time in a different role at Roswell Park, in a [press release](#).

Ziftomenib works by blocking menin, a protein that fuels the growth of leukemia cells. Dr. Wang and fellow physicians from the Roswell Park leukemia service led the phase 1/2 study. In the study of 92 adults, all of whom had received multiple lines of prior therapy, 23% achieved a complete response, demonstrating no evidence of disease after treatment. Up to one-third of patients newly diagnosed with AML have this genetic subtype and could potentially be candidates for this treatment.



PEF member Faith Austin, who joined the team at Roswell Park in 2018, is a clinical trials nurse coordinator for the leukemia service. She took an interest in research early on in her career at Roswell, working as a clinical research coordinator for a time before returning to nursing and eventually the newly created clinical trials nurse coordinator job.

"I am honored to be one of the first three nurses hired into this position," Austin said. "My job is to support and care for research participants by providing patient education, coordinating study-related care, closely monitoring patient safety, and serving as a key liaison and point of contact for physicians, pharmacy doctors, and the clinical trials office."

Austin said clinical trials require collaboration from disciplines across the facility.

“There is an incredible amount of work that goes into bringing investigational drugs to market,” she said. “It begins with our physicians, who identify and bring promising trials to the institute during the earliest stages of development. From there, it truly becomes a team effort involving the clinical trials office, investigational drug pharmacy, clinical trial nurses and nurse managers, and many others to determine whether Roswell can safely and effectively conduct the study. Once a trial is approved and opened, it represents years of ongoing work and collaboration.”

In the case of ziftomenib, Austin has been personally involved in the process for five years.

“A central focus has always been patient safety and supporting individuals through the complex journey of receiving an investigational therapy,” she said. “When a patient comes in for a study visit, there are many layers of oversight working together to ensure both safety and protocol adherence. That includes schedulers at the front desk, clinical trial nurses, advanced practice providers, clinical research coordinators, and investigational drug pharmacists. It is a highly coordinated, multidisciplinary effort that underscores how much care and diligence go into every step of clinical research.”

The work is rewarding for those involved in changing lives.

“It is incredibly fulfilling to be involved in research for these patients,” Austin said. “The approval of this drug is such an exciting advancement for relapsed or refractory NPM1-mutated AML patients. It is ideal for this population to have an oral therapy available so they can optimize their quality of life. I am honored each day to work alongside the physicians on the leukemia service.

“This disease is often aggressive and unrelenting, and we are striving to find the best therapies to optimize outcomes and improve the lives of our patients,” she said. “Being able to work with patients in this capacity is something I am deeply passionate about. Serving as a patient advocate and being a familiar, trusted presence throughout their care is something I never take for granted and is a large part of why I love what I do.”

PEF Legal staff contribute to leading labor, employment law book

By KATE STICKLES

The legal treatise, *Lefkowitz on Public Sector Labor and Employment Law*, stands apart as one of the most comprehensive books on New York labor and employment law. Available for purchase from the New York State Bar Association, it is a vital resource for judges, arbitrators, public employers, unions and their advocates.

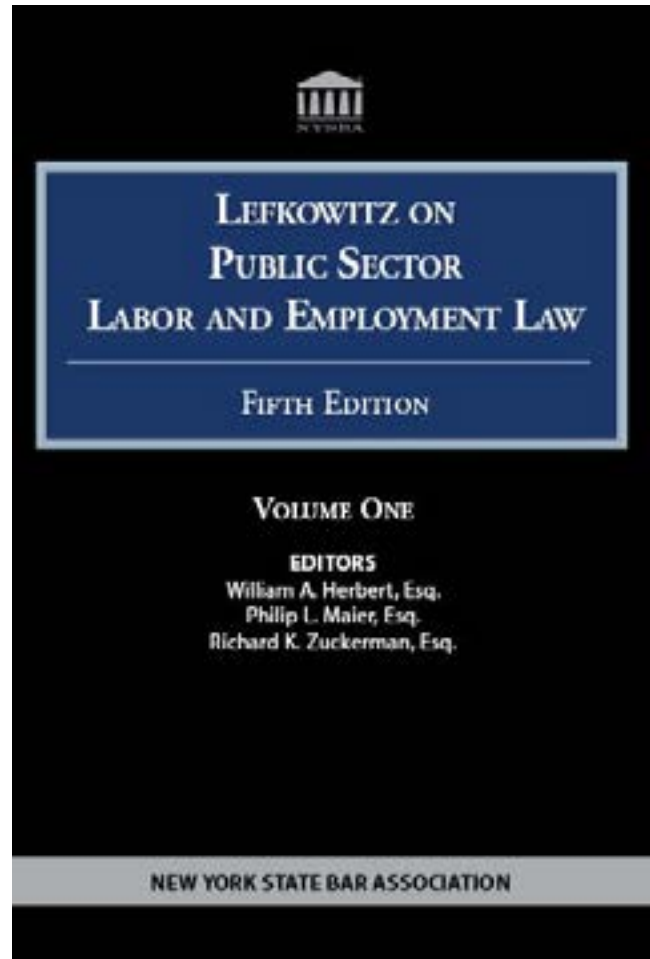
PEF General Counsel John Svare, Deputy General Counsel Alison Thorne, Assistant General Counsel David Friedman, and former General Counsel Ed Greene were tapped to contribute to the well-respected publication.

"Jerome Lefkowitz was a true legend in public sector labor and employment law, and his *Lefkowitz on Public Sector Labor and Employment Law* treatise has long set the standard for the field," said Svare. "PEF is proud to contribute to this work alongside the foremost minds in labor and employment law, reflecting our recognized expertise on these vital issues."

Lefkowitz, who passed away in 2017, was a highly respected labor lawyer who helped draft the Public Employees' Fair Employment Act (Taylor Law), enacted in 1967 following a series of public-sector strikes. The law governs labor relations for most public employees, granting them collective bargaining rights while prohibiting strikes, and defining improper practices for both employers and unions. The Taylor Law also established the New York State Public Employment Relations Board (PERB) as a neutral agency to administer the law. As Deputy Chairperson, Lefkowitz served as PERB's first employee in 1967, and later served as Chairperson from 2007-2015.

The book, now on its fifth edition, also covers other aspects of the law of public employment in New York state, including matters related to Taylor Law negotiations such as contract enforcement and the arbitration process; Civil Service law; retirement law and federal and state statutory protections.

Svare and Greene edited and updated *Chapter 16: Retirement Systems in New York State*; Thorne contributed to *Chapter 2(V): New York State Ethics Commission Reform Act*; and Friedman worked on *Chapter 9: Public Employment Relations Board: Functions, Jurisdiction, Practice and Procedure*.





PEF celebrated big legislative achievements in 2025

By **NAJEE WALKER**

As 2025 came to a close, New York State Governor Kathy Hochul signed the final bills passed by the Legislature, many of which addressed PEF priorities.

AI bills passed as the technology grows

PEF continues to lead in developing a fair and balanced regulatory framework to protect members and all New Yorkers from the potential challenges posed by the development and implementation of artificial intelligence (AI). PEF was successful in securing the first real regulations around the development of generative AI with the enactment of legislation requiring large AI developers working in New York to adhere to uniform development protocols, develop risk assessments and publicly disclose information critical safety issues. It also sets fines for failure to submit required information and required incident reports.

The other PEF-endorsed AI bill builds off of PEF's win last year by expanding the current wage reduction, layoff and displacement protections in place for PEF members at state-operated agencies to include employees at SUNY, local school districts and municipalities.

"AI is rapidly expanding. We have seen what it can do in almost every part of our lives," said PEF President Wayne Spence. "We no longer live in a world where we can try to avoid it, but if we are going to embrace it, we have to make sure our members are protected. These bills do just that."

Workplace bills centered on information and safety

Two important workplace bills were also signed by the governor. One focuses on providing important employment and benefit information to new employees, and the other affords state employees additional protection when a crime is committed at the workplace.

S5760/A6624 standardizes the practice of giving prospective new hires specific information about the position they are being offered. It amends current Civil Service Law to require state

agencies to disclose the salary information, appointment type, position type and duration, jurisdictional class, probationary information, collective bargaining information, retirement benefit information, deferred compensation information and information on health care benefits. It would also provide information on hold item positions, in the case of promotions.

S4906/A6055 amends the current executive law to allow for victims to choose to give police incident statements at the worksite or at a police station if the crime took place at a state-operated hospital, mental health facility or nursing home.

"Safety has always been PEF's primary concern. No one deserves to be attacked while at work and everyone deserves to come home the same way they left," said President Spence. "When these incidents do occur, however, we want to make sure that the perpetrator is held accountable. Making sure that the victim statement can be taken and evidence gathered as soon as possible and that the victim can do so with their comfort and safety in mind is incredibly important and a step in the right direction."

SUNY Downstate updates incoming

Last but certainly not least, PEF looks back with pride on its role in saving SUNY Downstate from closure. Working in partnership with United University Professionals (UUP), the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), members of the clergy and residents of Brooklyn, PEF secured \$1.1 billion in capital and operating funding to update the hospital and keep its inpatient services.

"This was a major announcement and victory for us in 2025," said President Spence. "Despite the uncertainty with the federal budget and the DOGE cuts that happened earlier this year, Governor Hochul and the majorities in both the Senate and Assembly have demonstrated a long-term commitment to improve SUNY Downstate and keep it running for the residents of Brooklyn. This is a tremendous victory for our members, the members of UUP and AFT, and for Brooklyn residents who deserve quality, accessible healthcare right in their community."

PEF member survives Hurricane Melissa, aids recovery efforts

By **NAJEE WALKER**

On October 28, 2025, a destructive Category 5 storm made landfall in Jamaica. With wind speeds of up to 185 miles per hour, Hurricane Melissa was one of the deadliest and costliest storms to ever strike the island. The impact is still being felt, with about 90,000 people still displaced or unhoused.

PEF member Joan Rosegreen was visiting the island when Melissa hit.

“Where I was able to find shelter, the roof was destroyed, the solar panels were destroyed, I was not able to communicate with anyone,” said Rosegreen, who has been a nurse for more than 30 years and is the Council Leader of PEF Division 198 at SUNY Downstate. “I was completely locked out of communication. No lights, no Wi-Fi, nothing. It was a traumatic experience.”

Rosegreen volunteers with the JAHJAH (Jamaicans Abroad Helping Jamaicans At Home) Foundation as well as the Rotary Club International. Immediately following the storm, she and her fellow volunteers assisted with recovery efforts. On November 4, she was finally able to return to New York, but found it hard to focus on her work.

“I was not myself. I went to a doctor and was told that I was suffering from PTSD,” she said.

To stay involved and help process her trauma, she organized a donation drive, eventually sending \$5,500 in donated supplies to the island, including flashlights, toothpaste, towels, sleeping bags and more. Three-thousand of those dollars were her own.

“I had to do it, I had to reach into my own pocket,” she said. “This is my country and these are my people.”

All told, the JAHJAH Foundation has so far raised more than \$204,000 to help Jamaicans rebuild.

Rosegreen returned to Jamaica in late November to visit her brother and further assist with recovery efforts.

“I knew I needed to go back,” she said. “I needed that closure.”

While visiting with more Rotary Club members from the United Kingdom, Rosegreen and other volunteers distributed clothing, lamps and additional supplies. They also helped set up water filtration systems.



PEF member Joan Rosegreen joined by Jamaican Parliament Member Dr. Dayton Campbell from Eastern Westmoreland.

At the PEF Executive Board meeting on December 4, 2025, two fellow board members — Raymond Moroz (Office of the State Comptroller) and Maureen Kozakiewicz (Department of Motor Vehicles) — contributed funds to the Rotary Club to help rebuild schools in Jamaica.



PEF member Joan Rosegreen was joined by former PEF member and President of the Savanna La Mar Rotary Club Dr. Jean Powell as well as members of the community in Jamaica.

Rotary certificates - PEF member survives Hurricane Melissa, aids recovery efforts "Raymond told me that he wanted his contribution to go toward rebuilding of schools in memory of his aunt who was a school teacher," said Rosegreen. "The Rotary Club was grateful to receive the donations." At a January 20, 2026, meeting of Rotary Club members, Moroz and Kozakiewicz were awarded Certificates of Appreciation for their donations.

Rosegreen said that throughout the experience, the one thing that has helped pushed her forward is knowing that the people of Jamaica are resilient.

"I was glad I was able to go down again and be with the community, my relatives, and see that things are already beginning to repair and grow," she said. "People are feeling positive, people are getting their lives back on track. A full rebuild of lives will take time, but we will overcome."



Certificates of appreciation were presented to PEF members Raymond Moroz and Maureen Kozakiewicz for funds contributed to the Rotary Club.



Recommit Today!

New + Existing PEF Members

SIGN NOW!

A brief history of pensions

By **NAJEE WALKER**

Pensions are almost as old as time. The first pension system in recorded history comes from the Roman Empire. During the rule of August Caesar, a pension plan was created to reward retired soldiers after 16 years of service in a legion and four years in the military reserves. Pensions were often monetary but sometimes came in the form of land grants or special government appointments.

In the centuries that followed, pensions were largely awarded to those who reached a certain age or served in the military. In the U.S., the first public pension plan was created in 1857 for New York City police officers injured in the line of duty. Later, firefighters were included as well. By 1878, the plan provided a lifetime pension for officers at the age of 55 following 21 years of service. Teachers in New York City gained a pension plan by 1894.

New York State did not offer a pension plan to public employees—through the Employees' Retirement System (ERS)—until 1921, a year after the federal government established a pension for its civilian employees.

New York's voters felt providing a public pension was so important that protecting public pensions was enshrined in the New York State Constitution in 1938 (Article V, Section 7). This Constitutional protection guarantees that benefits shall not be diminished or impaired. This provision, along with the entire NYS Constitution, is brought before the state's voters every 20 years for consideration. In 2016, the last time this was brought before voters, changing New York's pension plan was a major topic of discussion. In the end, 72% of New Yorkers voted against holding a Constitutional Convention and to support New York's pensioners.

Today in New York State, pensions are defined by "[Tiers](#)" numbered 1 through 6. However, that was not always the case. From inception in 1921 until 1973 (52 years!), everyone received the same benefits. Tier 2 was introduced in response to a fiscal crisis in New York City. The major difference between Tiers 1 and 2 is the age at which a member receives full benefits. For Tier 1, employees can retire at 55-years-old with no benefit reduction if they retire early. For Tier 2, employees are able to receive full benefits at 62-years-old or at 55-years-old, provided they have 30 years of service to the state.

Only three years after the introduction of Tier 2, in 1976, Tier 3 was created. Employees hired after July 26, 1976, joined Tier 3,

which requires employees to contribute 3% of their pay annually for 10 years. At the time of its creation, New York State cited rising pension costs as the reason for Tier 3. Tier 3 also had a provision called the "Social Security offset," which reduced an employee's pension equal to the amount they received from Social Security.

Tier 4, introduced in 1982, is very similar to Tier 3, but reduces the pension benefit for members who retire sooner than age 62 with less than 30 years of service. Tier 4 also eliminated the Social Security offset. As the retirement system became more solvent, public employers contributed less to the plan, and it was gradually improved.

The State waited 28 years before Tier 5 was created in 2010 by then Governor David Paterson, in response to the Great Recession of 2008. Tier 5 increased the penalties for early retirement significantly. Employees who wish to retire prior to age 62 now have their pension reduced by more than 38 percent. In addition, Tier 5 members must contribute 3% of their salaries to their pension throughout their entire career.

Just a year after the creation of Tier 5, former Governor Andrew Cuomo announced a proposal to create a new tier. At the time, Cuomo said that Tier 6 would "bring government benefits more in line with the private sector while still serving our employees and protecting our retirees." The former Governor also cited, just like in 1976 when Tier 2 was created, a "skyrocketing pension burden."

Tier 6 rolled back benefits once again. The age to receive full benefits increased from 62 to 63, and a longer "vesting" period was introduced. State employees now had to have 10 years of service in order to have access to their retirement benefits compared to 5 years in previous Tiers. In addition, employee pension contributions were increased to 3-6% of annual earnings, with no time cap. In other words, the more you make, the more you contribute to your pension.

In 2022, PEF and other unions successfully advocated to reduce the vesting period in Tier 6 back to five years. In addition, labor union advocacy in 2024 led to a change in the final average salary calculation used to determine pension benefits. It is now based on the average of an employee's highest consecutive three years of salary, instead of five.

But the fight to reform New York's pension plan continues. PEF and other public employee unions under the NYS AFL-CIO umbrella are pushing for additional changes to Tiers 5 and 6 so that the State can better attract and retain the professionals it needs to deliver services to New Yorkers. Proposals on the table include:

Lower the pension contribution for all employees: A higher percentage for newer workers is a disincentive for them to make a career in public employment and penalizes those who receive promotions or negotiated raises.

Eliminate arbitrary retirement penalties for career employees: Workers who commit their careers to a public employer should not be penalized when it is time to retire. Make retirement eligibility for members in Tiers 5 and 6 the same as for members in Tier 4 by allowing full retirement benefit for any member who is age 55 or older and has worked for 30 or more years.

Return to calculating pension with 2% of salary after 20 years of service.

A multi-union rally scheduled for March 8 at MVP Arena in Albany is "sold out" (the event is free, but ticketed), with thousands of union members from across the State expected to come together in the State Capitol to let the Governor and lawmakers know it's time to "Fix Tier 6!" (And 5!)

Editor's Note: If you'd like to send a letter to your State lawmakers urging them to "Fix Tier 6," PEF has made it easy for you! [Click here to get started.](#)

TIER 6

3-6%

Tier 6 members pay 3-6% of their salaries into the pension system their entire career. As they make more money, their mandatory contributions increase.

TIER 4

3%

Tier 4 member contributions are capped at 3 percent and end after 10 years.

TIER 6

age 63

Tier 6 members must work to age 63, up to 40 years of service, or face heavy penalties when accessing their pension funds.

TIER 4

age 55

Tier 4 members can retire at 55 with 30 years of service.



Register for NYS Deferred Comp plan webinars

The New York State Deferred Compensation Plan (NYSDCP) will be hosting educational webinars on enrollment and pre-retirement this month specifically for PEF members. The NYSDCP is a supplemental retirement plan, also known as a 457(b) plan, created to help State and local-public employees achieve their retirement savings goals and help bridge any potential financial gap in retirement.

Each session is limited to 1,000 participants. Registration is required. Once you register, you will receive a confirmation email about how to join the training session.

Enrollment Webinars

Tuesday, February 17, 2026: Join us for a conversation about the benefits of joining the NYS Deferred Comp Plan. We will go over the basics of the Plan and how to enroll.

- Noon session: <https://events.teams.microsoft.com/event/21676fa5-16e1-4c45-bac2-274515a4e0d6@22140e4c-d390-45c2-b297-a26c516dc461>
- 4 p.m. session: <https://events.teams.microsoft.com/event/72ee41cf-d753-447f-843f-cc8726d88e64@22140e4c-d390-45c2-b297-a26c516dc461>

Pre-Retirement Webinar

Wednesday, February 18, 2026: Join us for a conversation about important considerations as you get closer to retirement. We will discuss longevity, income sources, asset consolidation, and required minimum distributions.

- Noon session: <https://events.teams.microsoft.com/event/2424e826-2358-4f37-b572-cbe5998317d2@22140e4c-d390-45c2-b297-a26c516dc461>

Each session is expected to last about an hour, with 25 to 30 minutes of opening remarks and plenty of time for questions and answers. If you are unable to attend a session, but have questions call NYSDCP at 1-800-422-8463; [click to schedule a phone appointment with your local rep](#); or [click to enroll in the NYSDCP online](#) (you will need your paystub).

Division 187 donates \$2k to food programs

By KATE STICKLES

Members and leaders of Division 187 presented a total of \$2,000 to food banks around the state for the holiday season.

In Buffalo, the Division donated \$200 to [FeedMore WNY Foundation, Inc.](#), presented by member Matthew Srodawa. FeedMore WNY's mission is to offer dignity, hope and a brighter future by providing nutritious food, friendship and skills training to Western New Yorkers in need.

The Division donated \$200 to Meals on Wheels in Rochester, presented by members Yuliya White, Jessica Holland, and Michelle Ortiz. [Meals on Wheels at the University of Rochester Medical Center](#) provides nutritious meals to seniors delivered by screened, compassionate, and caring volunteers who are always ready with a pleasant greeting and a warm smile.

In Syracuse, \$200 went to [We Rise Above the Streets Recovery Youth Outreach Inc.](#), presented by member Andrea Hughes. The organization's mission is to deliver high energy messages that encourage people to live up to their full potential by breaking the cycle of homelessness and criminality through feeding the homeless, addressing food security, and more.

The Division also donated \$200 to [Northern New York Community Foundation](#) in Watertown, presented by Division Treasurer Chad Shelmidine. Since 1929, the Northern New York Community Foundation has invested in improving and enriching the quality of life for all in communities across Jefferson, Lewis and St. Lawrence counties, awarding grants and scholarships and collecting funds to benefit the region.

A \$1,200 donation went to the [Regional Food Bank of Northeastern New York](#), presented by Council Leader Timothy Bopp and Assistant Council Leader John Nicotina, in Latham. The food bank collects donated food and distributes it to more than 1,000 partner agencies and programs throughout 23 counties of northeastern New York. The food provided by the Regional Food Bank helps to feed over 350,000 people each month.





PEF member envisions exciting future for Newtown Battlefield State Park

By KATE STICKLES

Looking out across the landscape from the overlook at Newtown Battlefield State Park in Elmira, I saw a stunning vista of trees, water, and roadways — but PEF member Tori Srnka sees much more. She sees possibilities.

On Aug. 29, 1779, thousands clashed on the hillside during the Battle of Newtown, the only large-scale battle of the Sullivan-Clinton Campaign during the Revolutionary War. The battle was typically shared as being justified punishment against several Haudenosaunee (Iroquois Confederacy) Nations that had sided with the British and attacked frontier settlements.

While a monument to General John Sullivan, erected in 1912, stands on the grounds and several interpretive signs line the scenic overlook, the site offers little additional information to fully tell its story.

Srnka, an Interpretive Programs Assistant with the Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation (OPRHP) and a Recreation and Leisure Studies graduate, hopes to change that. The park has started the process to establish a comprehensive plan and has been collaborating with American Battlefield Trust to expand the park's boundaries through strategic land acquisitions — more than 378 acres of additional core battlefield have already been preserved.

"Currently, six interpretative panels share the history of the site: four regarding this part of the Revolutionary War, one on the history of the monuments that have been erected (and fallen), and another on the unique history of Civilian Conservation Corps Company 1251c, including the Main Lodge and other mid-1930s construction," Srnka said. "But little is shared about the battle's impact on the Haudenosaunee Nations, nor their perspective on the war or their deep, centuries-long history in the region."



"The agency recently hired a new Interpreter of Native American History working at our Division for Historic Preservation at Peebles Island State Park," she said. "She's a wonderful addition and we are so happy to have her working with Newtown as we move forward in sharing Our Whole History — an important agency initiative. The planning team also hopes to add a consultant from the Seneca Nation; having representation throughout the process and beyond is extremely important."

The newly preserved land includes historically significant portions of the core battlefield, including the breastworks and major troop movements. The expansion creates an opportunity to interpret battle strategies from all sides and illustrate what the landscape may have looked like nearly 250 years ago. Srnka emphasized the importance of sharing not only what happened at the Battle of Newtown, but also the stories before, after, and to come.



Future changes could allow for a visitor center or even a museum to enhance the experience. Srnka hopes local families who may still have artifacts passed down through generations might eventually be willing to donate or loan items for display. Currently, OPRHP has no artifacts from the battle in its collection.

Newtown is also one of a small number of sites in New York equipped with a digital Revisit the Revolution kiosk — an interactive touchscreen featuring Revolutionary War battlefields and historic sites across the state. Visitors can access the kiosk in the small Welcome Center during warmer months; it is stored in winter due to climate-control requirements. Thanks to funding from the New York State 250th American Revolution Commemoration Commission, work is underway to make the kiosk's information available online.

"This is one of 20 kiosks in New York, and we are lucky to have one of them," Srnka said. "It supports many learning styles — you can explore by site list or map, by story themes like people, politics, or battles, or through a timeline."

Srnka said the kiosk aligns with the vision for the park: offering an inclusive history that tells many sides of the story, not just that of the victors.

"We are also working with grant funds secured by the American Battlefield Trust through the National Park Service's American Battlefield Protection Program on a NYS Liberty Trail App," she said. "The app will feature three Revolutionary War battlefields — Newtown, Oriskany, and Bennington. Each site will have 12 to

15 stops sharing key points and places. For fans of augmented reality, the app will give visitors a virtual glimpse into the past. It's going to be amazing — you'll walk around and into an 18th-century Seneca cabin as it would have looked."

The app will guide visitors through the battlefield, either on-site using their phones or from home. It will include artistic renderings, photography, stories, and written history tied to specific locations — many selected with Srnka's input.

Improving accessibility

Not all improvements are in the planning stages — some are already in place.

The New York State Parks' Enhanced Visitor Experience (EVE) Program allows visitors to round up their camping or day-use fees through the Reserve America system, with funds supporting beautification, accessibility upgrades, programming, educational materials, and more.

Srnka successfully applied for EVE funding to improve accessibility at Newtown, resulting in three new ADA fire rings, 10 standard fire rings, four ADA-accessible picnic tables, and nine accessible shelf-swivel grills.

Newtown received additional funding through the agency's "All Are Welcome" program to install an EnChroma viewer at the scenic overlook, enabling visitors with color blindness to more fully experience the landscape. While those with typical color vision see more than one million hues, the 350 million people worldwide with color blindness see only an estimated 10 percent of them.

"We'll also complete the vision of a total campground improvement with all remaining campsites and picnic areas being outfitted with brand new fire rings and picnic tables," Srnka said. "We're upgrading the exterior features of a cabin, two campsites and two picnic areas to be more accessible, and adding new outdoor amenities at the other campsites and cabins. It's truly something for everyone!"

Srnka is excited to share these improvements with the community when the site hosts an All Are Welcome Day event in the summer of 2026, where the local community will be able to visit and experience a fun-filled day of accessible programs hosted by the regional Environmental Education team.

"I love that working for OPRHP gives me a variety of things to do on any given day," Srnka said. "I may be helping patrons with information about the park or local area; managing public water systems or repairing small plumbing issues; troubleshooting electrical line failures while maintaining public safety; planting trees; or planning events like First Day Hikes or I Love My Park Day. It's a diverse role and never a boring day."

Her passion for Newtown is evident.

"At the end of the planning process, I hope we are sharing more of the whole history of the site — hearing and interpreting all perspectives, including both its Revolutionary War and Civilian Conservation Corps significance," she said. "I hope we expand recreational opportunities, protect our unique natural resources, improve the visitor experience, and most importantly, ensure the site becomes what the public wants it to be."



PEF Pride Committee rising up and looking for members after hiatus

By **NAJEE WALKER**

The PEF Pride Committee is back up and running after former committee chair Sheila Ambrose had to step down for personal reasons. Erika Baker and Jessica Kumar are the co-chairs.

Baker is a Health Program Administrator with the Department of Health (DOH) in Albany. She is also a PEF Convention Delegate and co-chair of the DOH Statewide Labor Management Committee. Kumar is a public health physician and PEF Steward at DOH in Albany.

Baker and Kumar themselves do not identify as part of the LGBTQ+ community, but they both have family members who do and say it's their love for them that motivated them to restart the committee.

"This is a time when people need a safe space to talk and share community," said Baker. "The PEF Pride Committee can really be a place for everyone to just reach out, get help, talk and share."

"I have found that in doing this work and getting to know more parents and families who are similarly advocating for their children, there is a sense that we can do the work now to make sure the world is a better place for them as they grow up," said Kumar.

Baker and Kumar found inspiration in speaking to former chair Ambrose. They said her passion for the committee was infectious and helped motivate them to take on a leadership role.

"It was inspiring to hear her say that she would really like somebody to continue this committee," said Baker. "Her passion and drive were overwhelming. Plus, I am the type to raise their hand all the time!"

While the PEF Pride Committee has been working for some time to increase its membership, Baker and Kumar said that they saw a groundswell of support during last October's PEF Convention in Lake Placid.

"We were invited to present to the multicultural committee, which isn't something either of us thought would happen," said Kumar. "But they really gave us a really warm reception, and we were able to connect with other committees and leaders like

Scarlett Ahmed, Amy Pacholk and Gwendolyn Culpepper. The more we started talking to other members, the more we realized that we and other committees have so much work to do to make sure members feel comfortable in union spaces."

Kumar and Baker are hopeful that they can be a resource for LGBTQ+ PEF members to find healthcare resources and help with discrimination concerns, but they are also hopeful that members outside of the committee will be able to benefit from their work.

"We really want to change the idea of scarcity," said Baker. "We want to bring more people in and show them how things like inclusive language and respectful, professional dialogue can be a benefit to everyone."

One of their major goals for the committee is to make sure it is collaborative. They want the committee to be shaped by members.

"We really want people who get involved to feel like they have ownership so that they can decide what the committee is going to work on," said Kumar. "Since our meeting at Convention, we've been working on having members focus on work in their region, but also share information and resources so that no matter where you are in the state, you can use that information potentially for your region as well and keep the momentum going."

There are also plans for the committee to branch out and help local LGBTQ+ community organizations. Kumar said it is important for PEF and the committee to have a relationship with local organizations, especially when it comes to sharing information on health.

The committee is planning on several tabling events and seeks to have a presence at the upcoming Fix Tier 6 rally on March 8 in Albany.

The PEF Pride Committee has a [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#) page. The committee's next meeting is scheduled for March 27 at 7pm. Members can email pridepef@gmail.com to be added to the member list and receive a Zoom link for the meeting.



PEF Pride Committee Co-Chairs Erika Baker (left) and Jessica Kumar (right) visiting Lake Placid during the 46th Annual PEF Convention.



One new executive board member seated, seats at OITS and DOT to be contested

By NAJEE WALKER

One vacant seat on the PEF Executive Board was filled in the January 2026 Special Election. David Mosier will occupy Seat 35 on the Executive Board, representing certain members at DOCCS.

Seat 173, which represents certain members at the Office of Information and Technology Services, and Seat 505, which represents certain members at the Department of Transportation, will head to a vote. Ballots will be mailed from the American Arbitration Association (AAA) on Feb.18 and must be returned to the address listed on the return envelope no later than 5pm on March 11, 2026. Returned in this case means in hand, not postmarked. They will be counted on March 12, 2026, by AAA in New York City starting at 10am. The count can be observed by emailing SpecialElections@pef.org.

In addition, the following Executive Board seats are open in the next PEF Special Election, held in April: Seat 15 (Civil Service), Seat 50 (DOCCS), Seat 103 (SUNY), Seat 127 (Homeland Security), Seat 161 (Executive), Seat 200 (DOH Main Office), Seat 210 (State Insurance Fund), Seat 300 (OPWDD), and Seat 510 (DOT). Nominating petitions will be made available on April 6, 2026. Petitions can be downloaded from the PEF Elections page or by calling the Divisions Department at 800-342-4306, ext. 337.

To be nominated for an open Executive Board seat, a candidate must have been a regular PEF member since October 29, 2025.

Visit the [PEF Elections page](#) for complete rules.

PEF Division 357 awards 25 scholarships

The union's statewide division at the Office of Information Technology Services, PEF Division 357, recently awarded \$360 scholarships to 25 students who were enrolled in higher education during the Fall 2025 semester.

The PEF members (**bold**) and the scholarship recipients (parentheses) are: **Todd Lee** (Larissa Lee), **Lioubov Mikhailova** (Lidia Krylova), **Kim Heimborg** (Abigail Heimborg), **Cevahir Ozmusul** (Kerem Ozmusul), **Smitha Variserry Sreevalsan** (Shreya Mudavangattil Sajan), **Jose G. Rodriguez** (Jeremiah Rodriguez), **Michelle Peltier** (Patrick Graham), **Nicole Unser** (Gabriel and Vincent Unser), **Jennifer Fitzpatrick** (Austin Fitzpatrick), **Anjana Devi Valiveti** (Abhinav Gudapati), **Jerry Nestleroad** (Bryce Morin), **Min Li** (Catherine and Christina Cheng), **Heather Craven** (Teagan Craven), **Abdus Salam** (Nafisa and Sabrina Salam), **Matthew P. Carey** (Simon J. Carey), **Jacquelyn Bohlke** (Morgan Bohlke), **David Duval** (Laura Duval), **Amy Geleta** (John Geleta), **Yun Zhang** (Anthony Zhang), **James Kavanagh** (Lillian Kavanagh), **Moazzem Shikder** (Arfan Shikder), **Uttam Singha** (Hrik Singha).

Division leadership thanks the 2025 Scholarship Committee, chaired by Tony LaPointe, for its work in bringing this year's program to members, and extends congratulations to all the winners.

Scholarships can only be awarded once per student, but there is no limit on the number of awards per family. The 2026 Scholarship Chair is Dana Blair and information on the 2026 scholarships will be available on PEF's scholarships page and in the Division 357 newsletter emailed to members this summer.





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Today**



Protecting seniors from social media, AI scams

By JIM CARR – President, PEF Statewide Retirees

At the end of January, I participated in a “Stop the Scam” campaign webinar on protecting older adults from social media and AI-driven fraud presented by the Alliance for Retired Americans, an organization with which PEF Retirees are affiliated. The New York State chapter of the Alliance for Retired Americans (NYSARA) is a strong advocate for seniors. You can learn about their work [here](#). Below is an excerpt from the NYSARA Monday Alert that I think you might find helpful.

On January 13, NYS Governor Kathy Hochul gave her annual State of the State address. The Governor emphasized many issues, but she spoke about the prevalence of scam and fraud against older adults. Governor Hochul said protecting older adults from abuse, scams and elder abuse (physical, social, financial or sexual abuse or neglect) impacts many adults aged 60 and older in New York State.

It is estimated that 300,000 older New Yorkers are victimized annually. Meanwhile, adults over the age of 60 are especially targeted for financial scams and fraud. In 2024, seniors over 60 years of age lost \$4.8 billion to scams, while those aged 50-59 lost \$2.5 billion, according to a recent report released by the FBI. To expand efforts to protect older adults from abuse, scams and fraud, Governor Hochul will direct the NYS Office for the Aging (NYSOFA) to create comprehensive virtual elder abuse prevention and response training modules that are free of charge and accessible to the public.

With NYSARA's partnership with NYSOFA we are planning a train-the-trainer curriculum on prevention of senior fraud and scams that will kick off in March with the first trainings scheduled at the April and May meetings of NYSARA Chapters.

Barry Kaufmann, President of the New York State Alliance for Retired Americans, released the following statement in response to Governor Kathy Hochul's announcement of a new initiative to protect seniors from abuse, scams, and fraud in the State of the State address.

“Governor Hochul's initiative is exactly the kind of smart, proactive leadership older New Yorkers need right now. The need is great. Thousands of older New Yorkers are targeted each year by financial scams and criminals are increasingly using artificial intelligence and social media platforms to create more convincing and dangerous schemes. Providing free, accessible elder-abuse prevention and response training will help empower families, caregivers, and communities to intervene before harm occurs and save seniors from devastating financial losses and protect their dignity, independence, and security.”

Learn about the Stop the Scam campaign [here](#).



PEF in the News

VP DiAntonio weighs in on OCFS secure center issues

In a New York Focus exposé on solitary confinement at Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) secure facilities, PEF Vice President Randi DiAntonio was interviewed to shed light on staffing shortages and the negative impact on youth and the services they need at places like OCFS Industry in Rochester. The article also linked to PEF President Wayne Spence's letter to legislators on the increasingly dire situation at these facilities.

Read the full story [here](#).



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Letter to the Editor

To the Editor:

Il wanted to take a moment and respond to a letter in the prior *Communicator* wherein the writer perpetuated a historically false claim in an attempt to fortify their complaints over Randi Weingarten's book excerpt in the October 2025 *Communicator* as well as the distribution of her book, *Why Do Fascist Fear Teachers?* to Delegates at this year's Convention. Knowing of its recent publication, I can personally say I appreciated receiving it and look forward to reading it because the topic coincides with my long-time personal interests.

The writer started with a foundational claim which has been widely circulated in right-wing and far-right circles for years and which was widely popularized by the deceased radio host, Rush Limbaugh. In an effort to differentiate themselves from the political formations which promoted ideals which closely resemble or are the same as those which they promote, far right radio hosts, authors, podcasters and "influencers" continue to make the claim that the fascist governments of Germany and Italy were, paradoxically, "socialist." The source of this falsehood is in the official name of the ruling German fascist party from 1933 through 1945 -- the National Socialist German Workers' Party. Anyone familiar with history knows National Socialism was developed in direct opposition to Socialism. To Nazis, "socialism" was a non-egalitarian chauvinistic premise which prioritized a nationalized race-based hierarchy over culturally and religiously diverse international cooperation or integration. In fact, Adolf Hitler went so far as to claim Marxists had stolen the term and he was taking it back.

If we further deconstruct the claim of being a "workers' party," we will likewise observe that this claim is also false. Nazis economically prioritized capitalists over workers and the letter's author is correct in the observation the German unions were forcefully destroyed in 1933 when the Nazis seized power. The writer is grossly incorrect with his assertion about the Nazis not fearing unions, however. In the late 1920s and early 1930s, the German Trade Union Movement was one of the largest and strongest in the world. Threatened by organized labor, not only did they dissolve unions by decree on May 1, 1933, the Nazi's Brown Shirts beat members, stole their funds, attacked their meeting halls and much more including sending leadership to concentration camps. To claim the German Labour Front (DAF) was a "government-supported union" is not only a grotesque misrepresentation, it obscures the fact it was the organization which stole those funds, halls, etc. It was the organization put in place to enforce workforce decrees and propaganda when Hitler banned collective bargaining. In my view, actions of this sort most certainly indicate Hitler and his government were afraid of unions. Assaults of this kind wouldn't have been taken had the Nazis been confident in workers' acceptance of their economic and political policies. Do not forget they rose to power by exploiting an insecure aristocracy and the wealthy during economically hard times by ensuring their economic position and power. They broke up the unions because they were afraid of a legitimate, principled opposition which stood for working people.

It is my conclusion the writer is ideologically indignant a president of one of our parent unions appeared in the *Communicator*, doesn't like her research and the resulting book, and is willing to perpetuate a bald-headed lie in an effort to create and perpetuate toxic divisiveness. Authoritarians like Hitler or authoritarian wannabes do things like issue orders disbanding unions or calling for rival political parties to be declared

enemies of the state because they are a direct threat to their quest for enrichment or power. Why try to sweep this historically repeating fact under the rug? Unions provide the working class a voice and strength through unity and trying to divide and isolate us is a tactic our opponents have used time and time again. Read up or take a course on labor organizing like that which is offered by Cornell University, and you too will see repeated use of this tool (the end notes to Weingarten's book excerpt are an excellent source with which to start). While someone might take exception with something our administration might or might not do, they should voice their argument honestly and without perpetuating an old trope of division with disingenuous intent and factually untrue arguments. I have to ask myself what are they covering up? What lies beneath the surface? Do not submit to such division! While we may not agree on everything, our strength is in our solidarity. Let us never forget.

Myron Getman

Council Leader, PEF Division 205 (Department of Health)



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Your fellow 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.

Lynette Ambrose is a training specialist 1 at Western New York DDSO in West Seneca.

Elizabeth Newman Cable is a patient access supervisor at Roswell Park Comprehensive Cancer Center in Buffalo.

Maritza Echevarria is an ICM at Bronx Psychiatric Center in the Bronx.

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

Sally Fontana is social work supervisor 1, LCSW at Mohawk Valley Psychiatric Center in Utica. To obtain a donation form, email MVPersonnel@omh.ny.gov.

Naomi Gillespie (Jusino) is a tax technician 1 at the Department of Tax and Finance in Albany.

June Gilroy is a policy analyst 2 at the Authorities Budget Office in Albany. Contact BSCBenefitsAdmin@ogs.ny.gov to obtain a donation form.

Wayne Green is a maintenance supervisor 3 at St. Lawrence Psychiatric Center in Ogdensburg.

Kathryn Hampton is a human rights specialist 2 at the Division of Human Rights in Brooklyn.

Kathleen Hill is a registered nurse 1 at SUNY Upstate in Syracuse. Email leaves@upstate.edu to obtain a donation form.

Hannah Kennedy is an information technology specialist 2 at the Office of Information Technology Services in Albany. Email HR.LeaveManagement@its.ny.gov to obtain a donation form.

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

Nina Ledkovsky is a registered nurse 1 at Green Haven Correctional Facility in Stormville.

Kimberly MacDuff is a taxpayer services specialist trainee 1 at the Department of Tax and Finance in Albany.

Gerard Mazurkiewicz is a fire protection specialist 1 at the Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Services in Buffalo.

Lee Moore is an auditor 2 at the Department of Tax and Finance in Syracuse.

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

Adrienne Nicholson is a Medicaid eligibility examiner 3 at the Department of Health in Albany.

Danielle Newell-Emory is an investigative specialist 1 at the Office of Cannabis Management in Albany.

Cecilia O'Shea is a legal assistant 2 at the Department of Tax and Finance in Albany.

Nicole Skaros-Marcello is a training specialist 1 at OPWDD Western New York DDSO in West Seneca.

Harold Stone is an investigative specialist 1 in the Bureau of Narcotic Enforcement, Department of Health in Syracuse.

Christine Thayer is a MITS 1 at the Office of Information Technology Services in Albany. Email HR.LeaveManagement@its.ny.gov to obtain a donation form.

Sabrina Vaccarello is a registered nurse supervisor 1 at SUNY Stony Brook on Long Island.

JoAnn Waldrop is a business systems analyst 1 at the Worker's Compensation Board in Schenectady.

Nicole Welch is an auditor trainee 1 at the Department of Tax and Finance in Syracuse.

Jen Wolcott-Dean is a vocational instructor 4 at Wyoming Correctional Facility in Attica.

Jennifer Zullo is a research scientist 2 at the Office for People With Developmental Disabilities 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.



January 29, 2026

PEF Members at Division 276 in the Hudson Valley — who work at the Office for People with Developmental Disabilities and the Office of Information Technology Services — attended a membership meeting, learning about the union’s upcoming contract negotiations, the Tier 6 rally planned for March 8 in Albany, and other union priorities.



January 28, 2026

PEF staff and retired nurses from SUNY Downstate were on the NYC Nurse picket line at Mt. Sinai West in solidarity with New York State Nurses Association!



January 23, 2026

PEF VP Randi DiAntonio and staff attended the Rochester Psych Wellness Fair, hosted by the RPC Wellness Committee. This year was especially exciting with increased participation from both employees and vendors!

PEF is thrilled to see the new Wellness room(s) opening at RPC and looks forward to seeing staff ideas come to life in these spaces.



January 18, 2026

PEF members were back on the NYC Nurse Strike lines today in solidarity with New York State Nurses Association at Bronx Montefiore and Mt. Sinai Hospitals.

January 16, 2026

PEF elected officers and Region 1 members were honored to attend the 5th Annual Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Legacy Lunch in Buffalo. Vice Presidents Darlene Williams and Randi DiAntonio led the delegation, which also included Regional Coordinator Vincent Cicatello, Membership Benefits Administrator Stephanie McLean-Beathley, and dozens of local leaders and members. This weekend, let us all remember Dr. King's inspirational words to delegates at the Illinois AFL-CIO Convention in October 1965: "The labor movement was the principal force that transformed misery and despair into hope and progress."



January 15, 2026

was a great day at OAG-Division 351's meeting! Attorney General Tish James joined us, and our PEF team - including President Spence, VP Darlene Williams, Political Director Leah Gonzalez, Health & Safety Specialist Mike Marquez, COPE Coordinator Don Morgenstern and Regional Coordinator Tamara Martin - were there talking with members about the contract, benefits, health & safety, Tier 6, COPE, upcoming events, and answering lots of questions.



February 8, 2026

PEF leaders and staff attended the AFT Northeast Leader Meeting in New York City.

