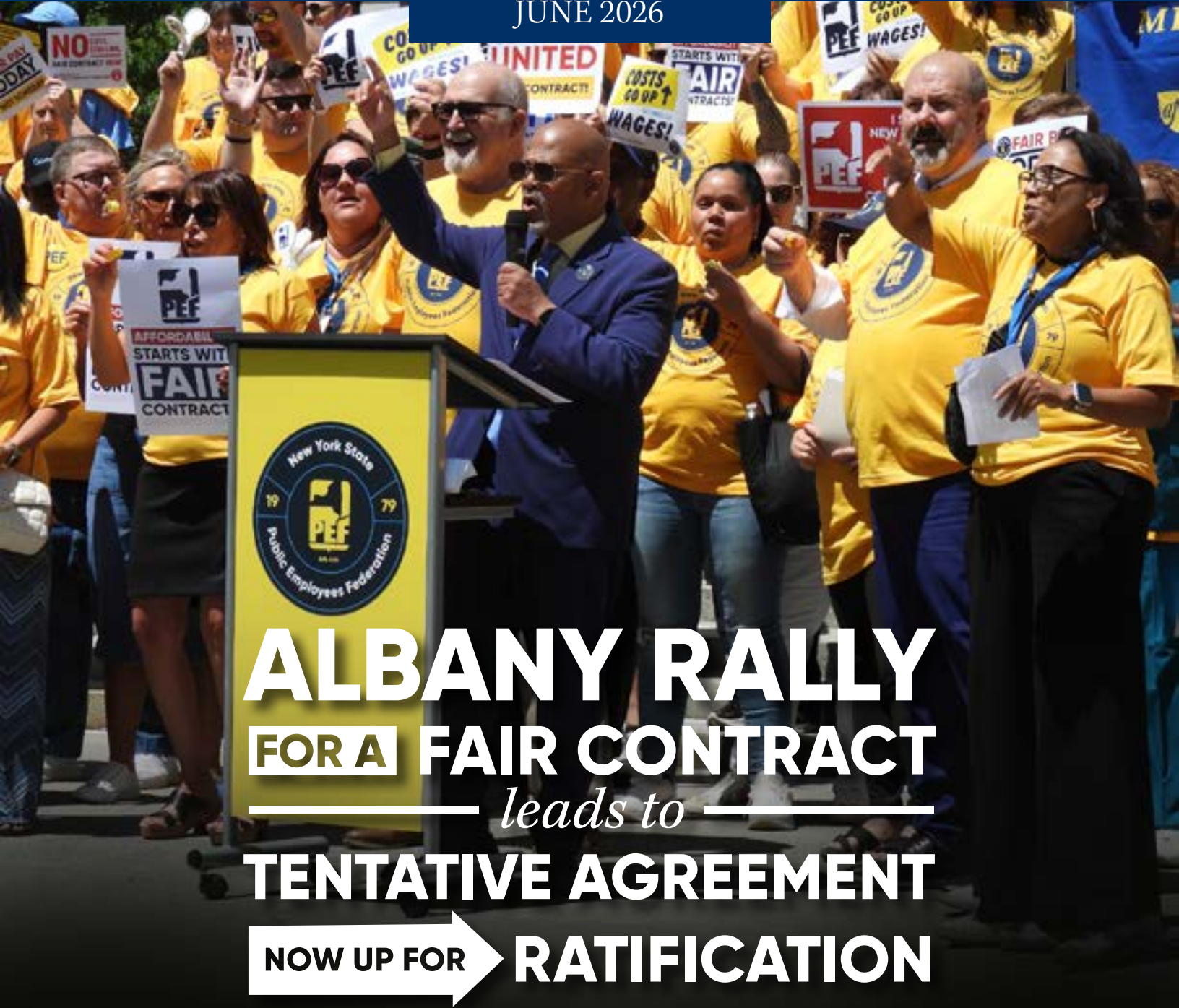


Vol. 44

# The COMMUNICATOR

No. 5

JUNE 2026



## ALBANY RALLY FOR A FAIR CONTRACT

*leads to*

## TENTATIVE AGREEMENT

NOW UP FOR

RATIFICATION

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## THE COMMUNICATOR

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# The President's Message By WAYNE SPENCE

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## **PEF tentative agreement delivers raises, long-sought dental plan**

I want members to know that the 2026-2031 Tentative Agreement for the PS&T Unit that is now up for ratification marks the culmination of a long and difficult road. We knew it would be long and difficult. That's why we started demanding in August 2025 to sit down with the Governor's negotiating team and get started on a successor contract. They stalled and stalled and finally came to the table on Feb. 2, 2026, while at the same time opening negotiations with CSEA and UUP.

This insistence on pattern bargaining has always been frustrating. I consider PEF members to be unique State employees. You work professional, scientific, and technical jobs that require advanced training and education. So when New York State tried to force us to take the exact same deal other public sector unions received, we told them that was not acceptable. We went ahead with our rally on June 4 during the Executive Board meeting and I was pleased to see nearly 600 members there demonstrating their desire for a fair contract. That show of force, followed by a personal conversation with Governor Kathy Hochul and an all-night bargaining session after the rally on Thursday in Albany, helped achieve the agreement you will now consider.

And let me be clear – while the across-the-board percentages are the same as what CSEA and UUP got (4.5 in 2026%, 4% in 2027, 3.5% in 2028, 3% in 2029, and 3% in 2030), the Tentative Agreement now before you contains a whole lot more. We achieved something I've pursued since 2015: Approval to establish a PEF Employee Benefit Fund to administer our own dental and vision plans. This is something PEF last had back in the late 1980's, and if you know anyone who was a member back then, ask them how good their dental care was compared to now. The State is seeding the fund with more than \$30 million to get it started and I am confident that when it is all set up and delivering care, the PEF Employee Benefit Fund will result in better coverage, more dentists, and a dramatically improved plan to serve PEF members.

The tentative agreement contains many more wins, both economic and non-economic, and you will be sent a summary of the highlights, a look at gains and tradeoffs, and the entire tentative agreement for review in the mail later this month. We will also have digital versions of each document for you to read next week. The exact timeline for the ratification vote is still being determined, but we will communicate that to you via email, social media, the PEF app and the PEF website.

I'd like to thank the entire Contract Team, led by Chair Darlene Williams and Chief Negotiator Mark Richard, as well as PEF Contract Administration Director Ben Traslaviña and Executive Director Deb Greenberg, for their tireless work. It took 129 days from the first meeting to the Executive Board vote, with lots of time spent after hours and on the weekends. We do it because we believe you deserve a contract that rewards and respects the critical work you do. Thank you for your membership and thank you in advance for your thoughtful consideration of this tentative agreement.

In Unity,

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

Wayne Spence  
PEF President



# Board approves five-year PS&T tentative contract; dues-paying members will now decide whether to ratify

On June 11, 2026, the PEF Executive Board convened a Special Session to consider the negotiated 2026-2031 tentative agreement for all PEF-represented members of the Professional, Scientific and Technical Services (PS&T) unit. Board members were presented with the tentative contract and asked questions about various aspects of it during a vigorous debate. A roll call vote was then held, and the final tally was 91 yes, 1 no, and 1 abstain. Per PEF policy, when a roll call is conducted by the Executive Board, the results are published for members to review. [Here is how each Executive Board member voted.](#)

The specific timeline for the ratification vote is still being finalized, and will be shared with members via email, social media, and the PEF website and app. A Special Communicator Edition will be printed later this month and mailed to dues-paying members who are eligible to vote on the contract. It will contain the full agreement, plus a look at the highlights and the gains and tradeoffs. In the meantime, the documents will be made available for member review on the PEF [website](#) as they are finalized.





New board members were sworn in at the start of the meeting. Left to right: Jessica Schrufer, DOT; Tanya Oliver, DOCCS; Cortney Edwards, DOH; and Kevin Dobies, SIF.

# Executive Board discusses contract, pension reforms, and Civil Service issues

By KATE STICKLES

The PEF Executive Board met on June 4 and 5 in Albany, kicking off the quarterly meeting with a presentation on reforms to the pension plan, a Q&A with Civil Service Commissioner Timothy Hogues, and updates on COPE and member engagement.

On day one, members marched during their lunch hour from the Albany Hilton up to West Capitol Park where about 600 members rallied for a fair contract. Day two brought word of a conceptual agreement between the union and the State Office of Employee Relations on a five-year contract with across-the-board wage increases, major dental gains, and other economic wins.



## Tier 6 reforms

Conversations continue to swirl around the differing benefits secured in the Tier 6 plan, with frustration and misconceptions boiling over.

“Given the overall cost to repair these plans, no one ever said fixing Tiers 5 and 6 would happen overnight,” said Legislative Director Patrick Lyons. “We got something done.”

Careful consideration went into where to focus lobbying efforts this year, with more money in members’ pockets the top priority. That’s why PEF fought for a reduction in employee pension contributions rather than retirement at age 58 following 30 years of service, which is what some teachers received. While teachers tend to start service in their early 20s, the average age of entry into service for a state employee is 36 years old. With Tier 6 only created in 2012, members will need to work until 2042 to reach 30 years of service, leaving PEF 16 more years to work toward a change in the minimum retirement age. In the meantime, reducing contributions for employees in Tier 6 increases everyone’s take-home pay.

“New York is the only state in the nation that is improving pension benefits for public employees -- in Alaska, they are fighting to get their defined pension benefit plan back after it was eliminated,” Lyons told the board. “PEF has consistently said that Tier 6 reform would require a long-term strategy given the cost and the desire to not dramatically increase employer costs that might lead to the creation of a Tier 7. While not everything we wanted, with the overtime changes and the band and contribution reductions, PEF successfully increased the benefits and decreased members’ costs to participate in a guaranteed, defined-benefit pension plan.”

These latest reforms follow significant improvements PEF already achieved, including the shift from 10 years vesting to 5 years in 2022, and the change in the Final Average Salary calculation from 5 years to 3 in 2024.

In the years ahead, Lyons told the board PEF will continue to push for a 55-30 retirement option, a flat reduction in employee contributions to 3% regardless of salary, an improved pension factor, and reduced early retirement penalties. Lyons thanked the board and the members they represent for their advocacy. The March rally at MVP Arena in Albany that attracted 15,000 union members from across the State and the thousands of letters members wrote demanding legislators “Fix Tier 6” really made a difference, he said.

### **Civil service discussion**

Department of Civil Service Commissioner Hogues took the podium to give the board an update on the status of the statewide compensation study, outlining the timeline from request for proposals in 2024, to now.

In addition to questions on the release of the compensation study, the board inquired when lists would be available following computer-based testing models, the rationale for the continued reliance on the New York Hiring for Emergency Limited Placement (NY HELPS) program, how increased use and scoring of training and experience exams (T&Es) would work, and more.

### **RELATED: Hogues grilled by Executive Board about Civil Service issues**

Hogues closed his discussion by asking that members inform him about any issues with promotional exams or positions impacted by HELPS hiring and indicated “as soon as [the compensation study] is complete we will put it out there and we will push it. I have told my team and my executive staff that this is one of our top priorities.”

### **Financial reports**

Secretary-Treasurer Joe Donahue reported net income of \$1.8 million and total dues income to date of \$47,687,532, with 55,809 dues-paying members as of March 31, 2026.

He presented for approval a budget amendment to increase the staff benefits expense line by \$2.3 million, due to a large actuarial adjustment to post-retirement liabilities, and the state EOL expense line by \$100,228, due to increased EOL use throughout the year.

Amendments were made to the membership dues income, legislative expenses, divisional fund balance, and advertising budget lines to offset the changes, resulting in a zero net change to the overall budget.

### **Resignation**

Donahue also announced he is resigning on July 1. According to Article VI of the PEF Constitution:

19. In the event the Office of the Secretary-Treasurer becomes vacant, the President shall appoint one (1) of the three (3) Vice Presidents to, in addition to his or her other duties, assume the duties of the Secretary-Treasurer until a Special Election for the Secretary-Treasurer is held pursuant to Article X(B). If, however, a regularly scheduled Executive Board meeting is held before a Special Election for the Secretary-Treasurer can be held, the Executive Board shall review and approve, by majority vote, the

appointment at that meeting, which shall thereafter last only until a Special Election is held pursuant to Article X(B).

VP Randi DiAntonio accepted the appointment, and the Secretary-Treasurer position will be included in the October 2026 Special Elections.



### **Other business**

The Executive Board also voted to hold the 2027 and 2028 Conventions in Albany, citing significant financial discounts offered by the city and the large number of delegates from the Capital Region, which will save PEF substantially when it comes to lodging and travel.

COPE Coordinator Don Morgenstern reported steady growth in contributions to COPE.

“Our COPE obligation to SEIU for 2026 is \$163,740, an increase from our 2025 obligation of \$157,092,” he told the board. “My conservative estimate for 2026 is that based upon our income to date, we should be taking in approximately \$380,000 in COPE contributions, of which SEIU’s share would be \$190,000, well above our goal.”

As of May 1, 2026, member contributions rose 44.6% and retirees rose 14.2%. The number of members contributing increased from 2,045 in 2025, to 2,530 in 2026; the number of retirees contributing to COPE increased from 990 in 2025, to 1,041 in 2026.

On the member engagement front, PEF Director of Organizing Scott Harms reported a steady rise in membership as a result of increased hiring by the state. As of May 28, there are 56,701 active, dues-paying members of the union. He noted cyclical trends for nonmembers, depending on temporary or seasonal hires.

Harms said the department is focusing its organizing efforts on divisions with the highest non-member counts and added that opt outs remain low despite fierce lobbying efforts by anti-union organizations. Since February 2024, an average of only eight members per month have opted out of PEF membership.

Harms said Organizing actively tries to save every member who inquires about opting out by informing them about the value of membership – from legal representation to voting on the contract to insurance, retail and entertainment discounts.

The Executive Board will meet again September 17-18, 2026, in Albany.



Department of Civil Service Commissioner Timothy Hogues engaged in a question-and-answer session with the Executive Board at its meeting on June 4 in Albany.

# Board questions Civil Service commissioner about statewide compensation study

By **KATE STICKLES**

In May 2024, the NYS Department of Civil Service issued a Request for Proposals to secure the services of a vendor to review the state's total compensation structure, including benefits, and compare it with similar employers and recommend strategies to make it more competitive.

Civil Service Commissioner Timothy Hogues attended the PEF Executive Board meeting on June 4, 2026, to answer questions about the state of the study and other issues pertaining to his department.

He said Deloitte was selected as the study vendor in June 2024 and a contract was finalized with them in February 2025.

"Deloitte looked at 1,000 titles," said Hogues. "That was a lot of work that had to go into that. I wanted to give you that backdrop to say that we started working on this a little over a year ago."

Hogues added something "of this magnitude" takes time but the state was "getting close."

**RELATED: [Full coverage of the June 2026 Executive Board meeting](#)**

The formal engagement with Deloitte was extended by the State and is set to end this summer, but Hogues couldn't put a pin on precisely when a final report would be forthcoming.

"Just because their work is complete doesn't mean it's done," he said. "As soon as it is complete we will put it out there and we will push it. I have told my team and my executive staff that this is one of our top priorities. I have heard the voices of PEF members. At every event, PEF members come up to me and ask where the study is. It will be pushed out as soon as possible. I ask about this at least every week."

Executive Board members met that information with frustration, calling it a delay tactic and questioning the department's attempts to expand use of Training and Education exams (T&Es) as a basis for hiring.

Hogues touted T&Es as a way to break down barriers for individuals who are not good at multiple choice tests or who are fresh out of school.

"We want to give opportunities to as many people as possible," he said. "We talked to subject matter experts, and this is the model they recommend. This is what we are moving

“  
At every event, PEF members come up to me and ask where the study is. It will be pushed out as soon as possible. I ask about this at least every week.  
”

forward with.”

Computer-based testing centers like the first one in Cohoes, N.Y. (PEF Region 8) will continue to open this year, with eight more planned locations that will offer self-scheduling and be open six days a week. He said computer-based test scores will come out in “weeks” not months.

For computer-based tests held in February and March of this year, Hogues said he believed lists “have been kicked out rather quickly.”

An Executive Board member asked Hogues about the status of reallocation and salary differential requests, questioning whether the department had the authority to pause all review at this time.

“They do,” Hogues said. When asked why, he said the department’s staffing doesn’t support completing the in-depth work that goes into reallocation and differentials while also undertaking the compensation study.

Staffing was also cited as the reason for continued reliance on the NYHELPS program, originally intended to be hiring for “emergency limited placement” but that was extended for the

third time, now in effect until June 2028. The program was created on the heels of the pandemic, when it was a challenge to fill vacancies, and Executive Board members questioned what the “emergency” was now.

“I consider it an emergency when we are not able to properly staff our agencies,” Hogues answered. “We have heard it from you and others about staffing.”

Members pointed out how often they hear from members about being passed over for promotions that are filled by NYHELPS appointments off the street.

“We are hiring off the street and putting people into promotional titles that people have been waiting for openings,” one said. “Titles are being added that do not show they cannot be filled.”

Hogues asked PEF to notify his office whenever that happens.

PEF’s Civil Service Enforcement and Research Department has collected similar feedback from a survey about career mobility concerns and their experiences with the program. The results of the survey will be included in a report to be published by the union later this summer. The report will also include an in-depth review of the PEF titles in the program.



Archaeologists from the State Education Department and Department of Environmental Conservation work on digging up remains of soldiers found at the site of an apartment building construction site in Lake George.

# PEF members piece together history and deliver soldiers to final resting place

By **NAJEE WALKER**

It was a winter day in February 2019 when construction of a housing development in Lake George unearthed numerous unmarked military graves. Members from the New York State Museum and the Department of Environmental Conservation were called to investigate.

After almost a year and a half, Lisa Anderson — curator of bioarcheology at the New York State Museum and a PEF member for 41 years, along with her team — were able to uncover the remains, screen them, and begin the longer process of identifying them as Revolutionary War remains and preparing them to eventually be returned to their resting place.

“When we got to the site and were trying to decide how to begin, one of the archaeologists found some small buttons that had the Insignia of the First Pennsylvania Battalion,” said Anderson. “That was the only piece of evidence we had that linked this cemetery to the American Revolution. That really prompted everyone to get out there and do the right thing.”

Anderson said the excavation felt especially important given the history. Anderson and her team felt called to push on as the men of the 1st Pennsylvania Battalion would have been called to do.

Despite their name, the regiment served from 1775 through 1783, often in and around New York and New Jersey. A few of the soldiers of the 1st Pennsylvania Battalion would have followed Benedict Arnold into battle in Quebec. According to Anderson,



Lisa Anderson attends dignified transfer in Lake George (photo credit: NPR)

Fort George, which is now Lake George Battlefield Park, was the site of a makeshift hospital. Many were exposed to smallpox. The team believes there could be more unmarked military graves.

Julie Weatherwax is a research collections technician and 13-year PEF member. She said that while she did assist with the initial dig, it became clear as the team uncovered mostly fragments and pieces that her place was in the lab.

"It became overwhelming very quickly. As things would come in the lab, we would do a quick brush clean, sort everything by what elements they are, and after sorting, we would pick which element to focus on first. Like the femur, the big leg bone," said Weatherwax. "Sometimes the bones were in as many as 30 pieces. They were scattered and eroded. It was disappointing that there was more that wasn't fully intact."

Weatherwax shifted her focus eventually to teeth – which led to discovering things about lifestyle, age, and other factors of an oldier's life.

"We were able to put together 42 dental arcades, which helped us get to a minimum number for this site," said Weatherwax. "We were able to work down to the wire, just a few weeks before the bodies were reinterred, to get the skull, sets of arms, and sets of legs for three of the more than 40 bodies we were able to get together."

That mix of frustration and elation is why Weatherwax loves this job.

"It felt really good to make those matches. It's like a bunch of puzzles all mixed together," she said.

Alexandra DeCarlo is also a research collections technician. She has been a PEF member for four years. DeCarlo said that

following her internship and work as a graduate student assistant with the museum, she knew she wanted to come back and work full-time. Now, she said she feels lucky to be a part of the team.

"I was able to do my master's thesis on the foot bones from this work," said DeCarlo. "Once I started here, I began helping out with taking data and preparing the remains for the reinternment. Trying to piece together individual bones and then trying to gather information from that is a once-in-a-lifetime experience."

While the state already had regulations in place for dealing with remains of a certain age where burial sites are discovered, a new law passed in 2023 includes provisions to call New York State archaeologists if any remains found are more than 50 years old.

"We have always done this sort of work to assist law enforcement," she said. "And there are so many talented people here at the museum who love doing this work. But to be enshrined into the law and to begin compliance with that law is exciting. We are a small, niche department that most people do not know about, but we are helping the people of this state with something they don't think about until it turns up in their backyard, pool or park."

After seven years of work extracting the remains from the original site and reconstructing the bodies, the team prepared the 44 sets of remains to be transported from the New York State Museum to Lake George on May 20. The memorial service called "Repose of the Fallen" took place on May 22. Several members of the State museum team, including Anderson and Research Collection Technician and PEF Executive Board member Mickey Dobbin, were able to attend the ceremony.



The dignified transfer of the 44 remains of the 1st Pennsylvania Battalion. Handed over from the State Museum to committee and volunteers from Lake George on May 20, 2026.



# Office of Mental Health

## Policy pushed for by PEF at OMH leads to discovery of 13 knives in patient's room

By **NAJEE WALKER**

At the March 2025 PEF Executive Board meeting, members voted unanimously to consider a vote of no-confidence against Office of Mental Health (OMH) Commissioner Ann Marie Sullivan. Due in part to that vote, OMH, PEF and other unions began regular meetings to find solutions to issues surrounding workplace safety.

"They heard us very loudly and immediately after that we met with Commissioner Sullivan and we have met with her team every Monday since," PEF President Wayne Spence said to the executive board in June 2025.

PEF Vice President Darlene Williams, a long-time OMH employee in Staten Island, said she felt at the time that things were moving forward.

"We weren't divided into labor and management, but united as professionals who care deeply about people," VP Williams said last year. "I felt like the system was working the way it was supposed to, with respect, collaboration, and shared accountability."

Now, a year later, those talks have led to direct action to keep OMH employees safe.

Previously, OMH did not allow staff to search the living quarters of patients in transitional residences, even if there was reasonable suspicion of dangerous contraband. PEF leaders flagged that as a dangerous problem and called for more targeted searches.

After lengthy discussions, a new policy was implemented in May 2026 pertaining to residential searches.

The Reasonable Suspicion policy backed by PEF establishes what items are restricted and illegal, including drugs, cigarettes, nicotine products, cannabis, alcohol, firearms, electric stun guns, knives, knuckles, and dozens of other weapons and paraphernalia. The policy also establishes several standards for when a search should be implemented and the terms of what constitutes "Reasonable Suspicion," such as direct observation, odors, suspicious and observable behaviors, and other factors.

Almost as soon as the policy was implemented in May, it worked.

At the Capital District Psychiatric Center in Albany, a search was conducted based on a resident's history of hiding contraband. During that search, security staff recovered 13 knives of varying shapes and sizes. They were confiscated without issues or injuries, and the resident was removed from the premises.

"At quick glance, I know this sounds like a bad thing," said PEF Field Representative Christopher Moreau. "None of us wants to hear that there's 13 knives in transitional housing. However, this room was only searched under the newly negotiated procedural language that PEF led the charge on."

VP Williams agreed.

"While I am horrified that these knives were on the premise, I am so proud of the work we've done to ensure that this policy is not just talk. It's action," she said. "If it were not for PEF's persistence, and even our action last year to push us to the table, the staff would not have been able to search this individual's room. This could have been a much scarier, or even deadly situation."



# Member's interview with DOH doctor educates the public about Long COVID

By **KATE STICKLES**

The dark days of the COVID-19 pandemic may have receded, but for some the health effects linger long past the active infection.

For PEF member Jacklynn Blanchard, educating the public about Long COVID has become an ongoing mission. Blanchard works as a Criminal Justice Policy Analyst at the Office of Data Analytics and Program Support (ODAPS) in the Division of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS). She is a member of the Cultural Inclusion Alliance (CIA) which is headed by DCJS's Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, & Accessibility (DEIA) team. As part of that work, earlier this year she interviewed Dr. Geeta Sood, a Medical Director in the NYS Department of Health's Division of Epidemiology. The interview with Dr. Sood is part of a series that includes topics like living with a disability and neurodiversity.

"I believe that a lot of people don't know that getting COVID can still cause serious harm to their bodies or that Long COVID even exists," Blanchard said. "Each time you get COVID, you increase your likelihood of developing Long COVID regardless of if you had symptoms or if you're an otherwise healthy person. People should know it's not just affecting immuno-compromised adults or elderly people -- it's actually now the number one chronic illness being diagnosed in kids."

Long COVID is a chronic condition that can develop after a COVID infection. It can impact multiple body systems and seriously disrupt a person's life. There are more than 200

symptoms associated with it, but common symptoms include extreme fatigue and brain fog. It is estimated to cost the U.S. billions of dollars annually due to a combination of increased healthcare costs, absenteeism, and reduced productivity.

"COVID never went away," Blanchard said. "In addition to the risk of Long COVID, COVID can damage our immune systems. People are more likely to develop conditions like Postural Orthostatic Tachycardia Syndrome (POTS) and Mast Cell Activation Syndrome (MCAS) or to suffer from other serious health conditions."

"As we continue to navigate this, I think it's important that people have enough information to make informed decisions about their health, and I don't think that that's really happening right now," Blanchard said. "It's clear that the lockdown period was traumatic for a lot of people and I get that many would prefer not to think about COVID anymore, but I also think that they would probably prefer not to be getting sick all the time, too. Unfortunately, we can't have both. I think we need to take this more seriously before it gets worse."

You can view Blanchard's [full interview with Dr. Sood on YouTube](#). And you can learn more about Long COVID on the [DOH website](#). Other resources are available via the [U.S. Department of Health and Human Services](#) and the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#).

# AI Summit: Time for Action

## PEF leading the way on intersection of state workforce and Artificial Intelligence

ALBANY, N.Y. – The New York State Public Employees Federation (PEF) convened its third summit on the future of artificial intelligence (AI) in the state workforce on June 2, bringing together top officials in the state Office of Information Technology Services (OITS), legislators, union, academics and industry leaders at the Albany Hilton.

“AI must not come at the price of union jobs,” PEF President Wayne Spence told attendees. “We must lead the charge in making sure that we are speaking up for ourselves as this technology continues to feed into our lives. We must hold New York State accountable and ensure that they are responsible when implementing any sort of AI. It should augment the work of PEF members, not diminish or replace it.”

OITS Chief Information Officer Dru Rai also spoke at the summit, highlighting the fact that AI is already embedded in many of the State’s common applications. He pointed out that since New York is already using AI tools, governance of how they’re used is important.

A diverse group of stakeholders then participated in a panel discussion on cross-sector AI governance. Panelists included Rai, Scott Stalker, Deputy Chief AI Officer at OITS; Dr. Hany Elgala, Director, AI and Society College at UAlbany; Hina Siddiqui, Amazon Web Services; and PEF Vice President Randi DiAntonio. Other summit attendees included NYS Civil Service Commissioner Timothy R. Hognesi, NYS Insurance Fund Chief Information Officer Charlotte Griffin, Colin Brady from the Office of the State Comptroller, State Senators Kristen Gonzalez, James Sanders, and Monica Martinez, and a representative from the office of Senator Jim Tedisco.



“The AI Summit is not just a presentation, it is an active opportunity for legislative, agency, labor, academic, and private industry leaders to come together to discuss, debate, and navigate a fast-changing technological force,” said PEF Statewide IT Committee Chair Radhakrishna Mohan, who organized the ‘PEF IT Summit on AI: Time for Action’ with Christopher Ford, who leads PEF Division 357, which represents OITS employees across New York, and PEF Region 8 Coordinator Danielle Bridger. “Our goal is to collaborate on building the bridges necessary to meet these workforce challenges safely and effectively in New York State.”

As AI grows at an exponential rate, the PEF Statewide IT Committee is coordinating with Division 357 to come up with steps that are needed to address the needs of the PEF workforce and raise awareness on issues that may adversely

affect members. The focus is to come up with alternatives that are beneficial for both PEF members and to New York State in general without compromising the goals and vision of New York State.

Going forward, PEF will be proactive about initiating more meetings with legislators, industry experts, academics, and heads of different agencies to find a common solution and raise necessary guardrails for the safe implementation of AI in New York. PEF’s goal is to raise awareness and work on a solution that allows AI to be used efficiently for the common good while making sure human controls are in place to protect the workforce and New York citizens.



# Value of the

# UNION

## PEF wins lawsuit against state on out-of-title grievances

By **KATE STICKLES**

On April 23, 2026, PEF received a favorable court decision in a challenge to the Office of Employee Relations' (OER) denials of out-of-title work grievances filed on behalf of three SG 18 Registered Nurse 1s (RN 1) and a SG 18 Addictions Counselor 2 (AC 2) who were assigned to perform the job duties of a SG 5 Food Service Worker 1 and a SG 9 Food Service Worker 2.

The decision ordered that the Office of Addictions Services and Supports (OASAS) "is directed to cease and desist from assigning the grieved food service duties to employees in the Registered Nurse 1 and Addictions Counselor 2 titles."

In August of 2022, OASAS notified members at the St. Lawrence Addiction Treatment Center in Ogdensburg that due to a lack of food service worker employees, staffed by the Office of Mental Health (OMH), they would be assigned shifts for breakfast, lunch, and dinner at least once a week on a rotating schedule until the shortage was resolved.

"Article 17 of the PEF/State CBA prohibits out-of-title duties, and the members worked with PEF Field Representative Martin Blair to file contract grievances contesting the assignments," said PEF Associate Counsel Kimberly Livingstone, who was assigned to the legal case. "The grievances filed by PEF requested that OASAS cease and desist from assigning the food service worker duties to our unit members. OASAS and OER denied the grievances, alleging that the duties constituted a reasonable outgrowth/logical extension of duties. When the grievances were denied, PEF continued its fight by filing a lawsuit in Albany County Supreme Court."

In his judgement, Acting Supreme Court Justice Julian D. Schreiberman determined that OER "irrationally determined that the food service duties assigned to petitioners were a reasonable outgrowth or logical extension" of their RN 1 and AC 2 job titles.

Schreiberman said neither title includes any food service duties; the food service worker titles are represented by a different union; and the grieved duties do not relate in any way to the primary function of an RN 1 or AC 2.

"It is inappropriate to foist such duties, over a long-term basis, upon employees whose professional medical training and experience is in dire need in other areas of the facility," he held. "Furthermore, the food service duties are arguably detrimental to petitioners' inherent personal responsibility to maintain cleanliness in a health care setting, as they are being asked to clean up food-related spills and garbage."

The argument that there was an emergency need to have members perform these duties was also dismissed by the judge. The out-of-title duties were assigned for three and a half years, and in a planned, deliberate manner: "Even if the assignments were initially made in order to meet the operational needs of SLATC due to a sudden staffing shortage, there has been more than a reasonable amount of time to recruit and hire an appropriately graded Food Service Worker to fulfill the duties."

"The New York State Constitution, Civil Service Law, and Article 17 of the CBA offer important protections to PEF members against unlawful out-of-title work. I am pleased that the Judge recognized these essential safeguards and ordered OASAS to cease and desist" said PEF General Counsel John Svare.

PEF members are encouraged to reach out to their field representatives if they believe they are performing out-of-title work.

Click [here](#) to contact your Regional office.

# QWL grants boost morale, provide worksites with appliances

## *Value of the Union*

Through Article 14 of the [PS&T contract](#), PEF divisions can apply for a grant of up to \$1,250 per year for certain kitchen appliances to improve breakroom/lunch areas at facilities that do not have them or where they aren't in good working order.

The Quality of Work Life (QWL) Grants Program is a reimbursement program that can be used to pay for coffeemakers, microwaves, or refrigerators; the size, type, and quantity is determined by the number of employees served at a specific location.

"I've had members reach out to our Division for help in purchasing coffee makers, microwaves, and refrigerators," said Division 344 Council Leader Josephine Slifka at Central New York Psychiatric Center (CNYPC) in Marcy. "I called PEF and found out immediately about the QWL program. Our members need these appliances to make work life more pleasant, more like home, and boost morale."

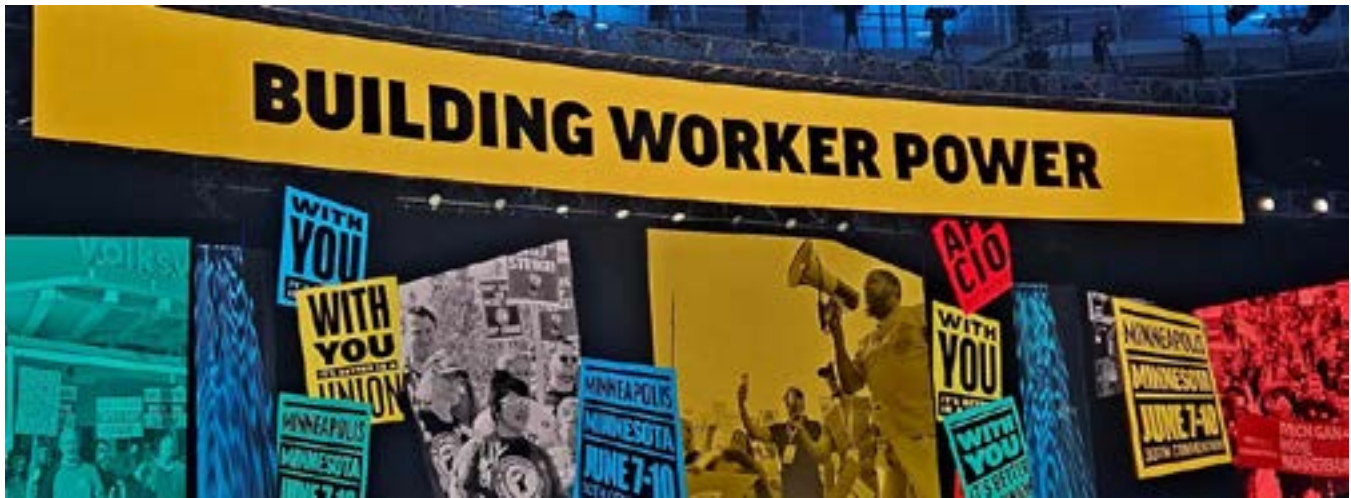
Slifka said some worksites had no appliances and others had broken ones.

"Since we started applying and receiving these items, more PEF members are coming forward to request these items for their offices or departments," she said. "This program is invaluable to our members. They are thrilled to have coffee in the morning and throughout the day, a place to heat their food, and a place to safely store their food."

Members at CNYPC tell Slifka they hope the program adds toasters to the eligibility list in the future!

Any PEF member can access the grant guidelines [here](#) and the application [here](#). New forms for 2026 are not yet available from the Office of Employee Relations, but OER will still honor last year's forms. Reach out to the Organizing Department at [QWLgrant@pef.org](mailto:QWLgrant@pef.org) for more information.

-- Kate Stickle



## PEF members participate in AFL-CIO convention

Several PEF members attended the AFL-CIO's 30th Constitutional Convention in Minneapolis, Minn., from June 7 to 10, with Region 7 Coordinator Barb Stransky representing the Jefferson, Lewis, and St. Lawrence Counties Central Trades and Labor Council; and Region 9 members Marisa Clinton (OPWDD), Dan McCormick (DOL), and George Marrett (Tax and Finance), representing the Hudson Valley Area Labor Federation.

Convention delegates from across the nation's largest labor federations reelected Liz Shuler and Fred Redmond to lead the nationwide AFL-CIO, as president and secretary-treasurer, respectively. Other business included debating Constitutional amendments, resolutions, and discussions on issues important to the labor movement, such as Building Worker Power, Artificial Intelligence Should Work For Us, Organizing to Win, and Creating the Economic Future We Want.

"It was an honor to be a delegate representing my local labor council," Stransky said. "While conversing with my fellow AFL-CIO leaders from across the country, I learned we are all fighting for better wages, a better way of life for middle-class Americans, and we are all organizing and fighting for better collective bargaining agreements."

Melissa McClinton found the experience unifying.

"This convention has been a true eye-opening and spirit motivating experience," she said. "With all that we are learning and all the connections we are making I have seen clearly how PEF is not in this fight alone. I have learned how organizing the members for fearless action is ever so crucial right now than it's ever been. The call to unify for the good, justice, and fairness of all was heard loud and clear. The move towards impactful change starts with one collective step and with the power of

PEF's bold action we can fight and we *will* win!"

Every four years, the AFL-CIO holds a convention to elect officers. Delegates representing working people from across the country and from every job category come together to choose their leader and express their policy preferences. Check out the Convention page [here](#).



From left to right, Marisa Clinton, Dan McCormick, and George Marrett, all from Region 9, and Region 7 Coordinator Barbara Stransky attended the AFL-CIO 30th Constitutional Convention June 7-10 in Minneapolis, Minn., as delegates of their area labor organizations.



## Endorsed Candidates

# Support PEF-endorsed candidates in primaries

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The primary election is June 23 this year, with early voting across New York State from June 13-21.

PEF's Regional and Statewide Political Action Committees recommended endorsements that were reviewed by the Executive Board. Committees recommend candidates who support the labor movement and union values.

The union has endorsed two candidates who are in a primary for statewide office – Comptroller Thomas DiNapoli and Attorney General Letitia James. A full list of PEF endorsements for all

offices is on the [union's website](#). (Click the + sign to the right of PEF Endorsements.)

You can also visit the state [Board of Elections website](#) for more information specific to your county, registration, and other frequently asked questions about elections.



# FIX

# TIER 6!

## Tier 6 reforms a win for public employees

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Changes to the Tier 6 pension plan included in the 2026–27 state budget agreement mark another significant step toward pension equity for public employees.

“While pension equity for all Tier 6 members is not yet complete, this victory shows that when we organize and fight, we win,” said President Wayne Spence. “These changes increase the value of members’ pensions upon retirement and decrease out of pocket costs to pay for these enhanced benefits. The reduction in contributions and changes to allowable overtime for final average salary will generate \$90 million in annual savings for state employees.”

Unlike prior years, the changes vary by retirement system, reflecting budget constraints and differences among state, municipal, and school district workforces.

Under the changes, a PEF member earning \$90,000 annually would see their mandatory contribution drop by \$1,575 per year (a 1.75% reduction). The cap on overtime earnings used in final average salary calculations will rise from \$21,589 to \$30,000 and be indexed 3% annually thereafter, strengthening retirement security for employees who regularly rely on overtime.

Learn more about how these changes affect different systems [here](#).

Since 2022, PEF has made significant progress improving Tier 6, increasing benefits while reducing costs. These are the most significant reforms to date. PEF continues to advocate for a flat 3% contribution rate for all members and a retirement option for employees age 55 or older with at least 30 years of service.

“While PEF did not secure every priority, this agreement delivers meaningful, tangible savings for our members,” Spence said. “It marks real progress—but our work is not done. We will keep pushing to bring Tier 6 pensions in line with the fairness and parity of Tier 4.”







# Old Tier 6

Original Plan April 1, 2012



# New Tier 6

May 26, 2026

Benefit	Old Tier 6	New Tier 6	Benefits for Members
<b>Vesting</b>	 10 Year Vesting	 5 Years	Members earn retirement benefits sooner
<b>Pension Calculation</b>	 5 Year Final Average Salary	 3 Year Final Average Salary	Members will calculate their final average salary on the highest 3 years
<b>Employee Contribution and Band Reform</b>	\$45k or less = 3% \$45k to \$55k = 3.5% \$55k to \$75k = 4.5% \$75k to \$100k = 5.75% \$100k or over = 6%	\$75k or less = 3% \$75k - \$100k = 4% \$100k - \$125k = 5.25% Over \$125k = 5.75%	Members will pay less toward their retirement and still receive the guarantee of a defined benefit pension
<b>Overtime Usage in Final Average Salary</b>	 \$21,500 = Annual CPI	 \$30,000 + 3% annual	Members will be able to use more overtime compensation in their final average salary calculation

 **FIX**  **TIER 6!**



# Members invited to comment on federal and state legislative agendas

By **NAJEE WALKER**

The 48th Annual PEF Convention is set for October 18-21, 2026, in Niagara Falls. Delegate elections are underway for contested seats, but the union expects another large turnout this year. The final delegate list will be published on the [PEF website](#) by May 29.

At Convention, delegates will debate, possibly amend, and eventually approve the union's State and Federal Legislative Agendas that help guide PEF's advocacy. Before then, all members are invited to contribute to the agendas.

"This is the start of a critical process," said PEF Vice President and Statewide Political Action Committee Chair Randi

DiAntonio. "PEF is a member-driven union, and this is a chance for any member to suggest new agenda items or make changes to items already in the agenda. These agendas really do govern a lot of what the union will seek to accomplish in the year ahead."

Each year, VP DiAntonio presents the agendas to the Convention body and chairs the debate. Members may read through the current [state](#) and [federal](#) agendas and submit recommended changes for consideration to Danielle Blue in the PEF Legislative Office at [Danielle.Blue@pef.org](mailto:Danielle.Blue@pef.org).



## PEF in the News:

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### **Parole division leaders interviewed**

Division 236 Council Leader Gina Lopez and Region 9 Coordinator and Article 18 Health and Safety Co-Chair Gabriela Franklyn, both parole officers, were recently interviewed by the [labor newspaper The Chief](#) about a Queens man on parole for a 1990 murder and attempted kidnapping who was charged with assaulting a parole officer after allegedly blowing a mixture of fentanyl, heroin and cocaine into her face during an arrest late last month.



From left to right, PEF General Counsel John Svare; keynote speaker Renee Delgado, vice chair, NYS Workers Compensation Board; Article 18 Co-Chair Leisa Abraham; Assistant Director of the Office of Employee Relations Ed Cottrell; Joe Cavalcante, Advocate for Injured Workers, NYS Worker's Compensation Board; Article 18-Co Chair Gabriela Franklyn; and PEF Health and Safety Director Josh Kemp at the 2026 PEF/NYS Health and Safety Conference in Albany.

# Conference tackles health and safety through skill-building and fostering partnerships with management

By **KATE STICKLES**

More than 300 PEF leaders and State management representatives came together to discuss health and safety at this year's PEF/NYS Health and Safety Conference from May 11 to 13 in Albany.

The contractual joint Article 18 Committee studies and reviews matters of mutual concern in areas of health and safety and serves as a forum where the union can advise the state of potential health or safety problems; participate in development and implementation of policy; and undertake initiatives in research, education and support of agency and local level health and safety committees.

"Our Article 18 rights were fought for and earned," said PEF Health and Safety Director Josh Kemp. "Workers face toxic exposures; members are assaulted every single day. We need to move as one – that's union power. Members who don't know their rights can't use them."

Region 3 Coordinator and Article 18 Committee Co-Chair Leisa Abraham emphasized the importance of partnership in advocating and addressing these critical issues.

"We have big things happening in DOCCS, we have workplace violence across so many agencies," she said. "Following a horrible stabbing at Buffalo Psychiatric Center two years ago, we started putting a paper together on how to report, how to file charges, and how to make agencies take these incidents as seriously as we take them."

"We are seeing a little improvement over the last year," she said. "That all comes from the work that you're doing with us."

Region 9 Coordinator and Committee Co-Chair Gabriela Franklyn praised leadership for stepping up and working relentlessly to make a difference at their worksites.

"Can you imagine if we united across agencies?" she asked. "This is the first conference where we have more than 100 managers in attendance."

PEF Vice President Randi DiAntonio emphasized that unity is key.

"You have so much power and some of us know it and some of us are just learning it," she said. "We have power when we stand together, speak in one voice, push back, fight back. Some people don't realize there is a crisis until there is a tragedy."

One of the most somber reminders of this is the 1911 Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire, where 146 mostly immigrant women and girls burned or jumped to their death when the building caught fire and they couldn't escape the locked fire escape doors.

Closer to home, DiAntonio said, was the murder of PEF member Judith "Judy" Scanlon 28 years ago, days before Thanksgiving in 1998. The tragedy put a spotlight on the safety of health-care workers.



“Events pushed our union to do more; to do better,” DiAntonio said. “Workplace violence prevention programs are a direct result of activities that occurred after the death of one of our members. That elevated it to a crisis. Tragedies motivate people and make us realize we are not as safe as we think we are. If we want to prepare for the future, we have to work in the present.”

That’s exactly what the hundreds of leaders at the conference did. Workshops ranged from addressing health and safety in leased spaces; building the foundation for health and safety committees; navigating an incident beyond spreadsheets; indoor air quality; unknown substance exposures in DOCCS, and more.

RELATED: [Workshop highlights how DOCCS responds to substance exposures](#)

Throughout the three-day conference, awards were presented to tireless and dedicated health and safety advocates.

**Judith Scanlon PEF Health & Safety Activist Award**

This year’s award went to Vincent Commisso, who works at the NYS Archives in the State Education Department. In 2022, he became a steward for Division 194 and in 2023 he became involved with health and safety. He now chairs the PEF/SED local health and safety committee in Albany. Commisso and his committee have navigated numerous health and safety events including asbestos abatements, lead mitigation, and water intrusion.

**Peter Shiffman Award**

This award is named for a longtime PEF member at South Beach Psychiatric Center who suffered a life-altering assault by a patient in 2024, leaving him with permanent injury.

Dr. Alexandre DoNascimento, a PEF member at the Buffalo Psychiatric Center; Division 180 Council Leader and Executive Board member; and the local health and safety chair, was this year’s recipient.

He was a frontline advocate for member safety throughout the COVID-19 pandemic and has directed his efforts toward workplace violence prevention.

**Kathy D’Arminio Special Recognition Award**

This award recognizes the life-long contributions of individuals who have distinguished themselves through a career of hard work and dedication to improve the lives of workers. The 2026 winner was former PEF Health & Safety Director Geraldine Stella.

D’Arminio served as Article 18 chair from 2006 to 2013. She advocated fiercely for safety and health programs; was passionate about developing strong labor/management committees; and encouraged members to get involved.

Over more than 34 years with PEF, Stella worked on a wide range of health and safety issues, from research and development

of national, federal, and statewide safety and health laws, standards, policies, and programs, to hazard identification, prevention, remediation and more.

**Bernie Kahn Outstanding Service Award**

Bernie Kahn chaired the PEF H&S Committee and the PEF Article 13 committee and advocated for better training programs related to workers’ compensation. The award named in their honor recognizes sustained and outstanding efforts to improve the lives of workers.

Parole Officer Najieb Isaac was this year’s recipient. A passionate and unwavering advocate for the safety and wellness of PEF members at parole offices in the Bronx, she regularly assesses offsite court and Department of Labor locations and has taken her advocacy directly to local legislators on behalf of her members.

When a homicide occurred outside the 79 Alexander Avenue office, she was among the first to respond. She immediately conducted a risk assessment and called for an emergency labor-management meeting to address the need for critical safety training.

**Agency Award**

This award is given by the Office of Employee Relations and PEF to agency (Management, PEF and CSEA) chairs that demonstrate:

- Dedication and perseverance in making health and safety a priority at the Agency;
- Efforts in the development of health and safety programs to include training and education;
- A model of labor/management cooperation to include communication with the labor management safety and health committees, department heads, supervisors, and others;
- Proven interest in new approaches to safety awareness in the workplace.

This year’s award went to the DOT joint committee, with Matthew Petrie and Cody Baker representing management, and Corinne Testa and Brian Dubois representing PEF.

Together, the four co-chairs built a committee that exemplifies what labor-management health and safety partnership can and should look like.

*Editor’s note: Presentations from the conference, along with workshop handouts, can be found on the [PEF website](#).*





# Workshop highlights DOCCS response and investigation into substance exposures

By NAJEE WALKER

Exposure incidents at New York State correctional facilities are on the rise. PEF has documented cases at Attica, Clinton, Mohawk, Upstate, Wyoming, and several others. Just last month, a parolee in Queens blew powdered narcotics into his parole officer's face.

That's why PEF invited three deputy chief investigators from the DOCCS Office of Special Investigations (OSI) to participate in a workshop at the Health and Safety Conference on May 12 in Albany.

Charolette Lamora, Joe Cavalcante and Sally Flores spoke to PEF members about their efforts to prevent contraband from being smuggled into or distributed inside facilities. The investigators admitted that smuggling strategies are always evolving.

"Obviously we know in the Department of Corrections there's drugs, and it's not just in the facility, it could also be in the streets," said Lamora. "If you're seeing ways of smuggling or if we're missing the mark on something that your people are reporting to you, we need to know. Our units rely heavily on the boots on the ground and people in the facilities passing us that information."

One of the most common ways drugs get into facilities is through legal mail or through soaking paper in substances. The investigators also showed examples of drugs hidden in everyday items like snack boxes, bags of chips, and a pair of headphones. Other recent smuggling techniques include throwing contraband over fences or walls and even using drones to fly over perimeters and drop packages.

DOCCS has used full-body x-ray scanners, 3D imaging technology called MailSecur, and air filtration systems to help mitigate the risk of exposures, but unknown substances still manage to make it in.

## **K9 units can help**

Deputy Chief Investigator Sally Flores works specifically with the K9 unit. She said that there has been a push for more drug-sniffing dogs inside the walls. It's a push welcomed by PEF President Wayne Spence, who sent a letter in April to DOCCS Commissioner Daniel Martuscello urging more canine deployment to help address the exposure problem.



"We currently have 33 K9 teams, 31 drug dogs and 2 E-Dogs," said Flores. "We have other states that are trying to mimic our canine program because our canine handlers are not just canine handlers. They're also investigators, so they take their own cases on recovery and they're working that case to see how it came in."

Currently, the drug dogs are imprinted on six drugs that are common in correctional facilities: Buprenorphine, Marijuana, Heroin, Cocaine, Methamphetamines and Synthetic Cannabinoids.

Last year, the K9 unit made 219 arrests and seized about 50 pounds of marijuana across the State, nearly eight pounds of synthetic cannabinoids, and hundreds of other illegal items, including heroin, cocaine, and weapons.

E-Dogs, Flores said, are specially trained to search for anything that has a memory card, like cell phones. Memory cards have a specific powder compound that prevents them from overheating, which e-dogs are trained to find.

In addition to prevention and seizure, OSI handles investigations. The Criminal Investigations Division investigates drug

distribution, possession, and other criminal activities. They also work with other agencies and federal law enforcement to assist with prosecutions when necessary.

“We develop intelligence on how the drugs are coming in and try to find the source inside and also the source outside,” said Lamora. “We respond to and investigate suspected exposures. One of the things we’re combating is when someone is exposed but there is no substance found, so we try to find out what you touched and interview witnesses and staff.”

Toxicology reports, said Lamora, are very important when dealing with exposure to substances. Lamora and her team recommend requesting a full toxicology assessment following any incident.

### **An ounce of prevention**

The workshop also explored preventative measures as well as responses in the immediate aftermath of potential exposure.

The OSI team said that all correctional facilities should have personal protective equipment (PPE), including N95, N100 and P100 respirator masks, nitrile gloves, eye protection and disposable coveralls. They should be available in all sizes and used during potential exposure events. Additionally, Fentanyl Response Kits are stored in mailrooms, package rooms, drug testing rooms, housing units, the Watch Commander’s office, and anywhere else a facility deems appropriate. If there are any issues with these items, PEF members should report them immediately to management.

In the event of an incident, on-the-ground teams, which may include OSI staff, will perform “risk assessments” to figure out how best to keep people safe. Level 1 incidents are the lowest, where medical emergencies may occur but with no known drug presence.

“That is the most common (incident) that we’re investigating,” said Lamora. “The protocol is to minimize contact with unknown

materials, avoid contact with face, eyes, nose and mouth, and maintain situational awareness for escalated signs like visual powder or unknown odors.”

At Level 2, there is awareness of an unknown powder, suspected fentanyl or other residue or paraphernalia in proximity to the emergency.

“The PPE requirements here are the respirator, full disposable coveralls, nitrile gloves, eye protections and goggles,” said Lamora. “We isolate the area, restrict access, keep response to staff at a minimum, notify emergency medical and environmental response teams, and follow full decontamination and report procedures.”

At the end of the workshop, the team introduced Matthew Altman, an Associate Industrial Hygienist with DOCCS, to reiterate the importance of ensuring PPE is available. He said that facilities should have the same training and controls in place and have assistance from PESH whenever there is a potential exposure.

“Hazard assessments are part of what we do at DOCCS following an incident. This is an OSHA (Occupational Safety and Health Administration) requirement that follows down into PESH (NYS Public Employee Safety and Health). We have to know and identify where our hazards are,” said Altman. “It also documents what PPE is available in each area. Anywhere we have a response kit, we have a hazard assessment.”

The workshop closed with a brief question and answer period, where members sought clarification on how best to protect themselves during an exposure.

*Editor’s note: The slide deck from the presentation can be viewed, [here](#).*



# Leaders take advantage of PEF Health and Safety resources on occupational stress

By **KATE STICKLES**

As a union, PEF takes on every level of workplace health and safety – from violence at facilities, to ergonomics, to occupational stress. Member leaders can request training for their constituents, such as the “Overview of Occupational Stress Impacts and Interventions” that took place at PEF headquarters on April 21.

Organized by Office of Information Technology Services (ITS) Health and Safety Chair Prakash Lal and Division 357 (Statewide ITS) Council Leader Christopher Ford, the training outlined the basics of occupational stress (defining stressors, stress, and strain); examples of job strain (high job demands, low job control, low support); and the difference between chronic and acute stress.

“Occupational stress and its impact on daily life is very common, and it is especially pronounced for employees working for New York State,” said Lal. “Our members are routinely expected to do more with less, operate under constant pressure, and meet deadlines that often feel like they were due yesterday.”

Ongoing organizational changes, staffing shortages, and inconsistent or inefficient workflows only make matters worse.

“ITS provides services to more than 50 state entities,” Ford said. “While we have a few ITS home locations, much of our staff is spread across the state and embedded in the agencies we serve. Our members experience not only the traditional stress conditions that you would expect in the IT industry but also stress from the agencies hosting us.

“We are alongside staff from the Department of Health, Department of Corrections and Community Supervision, the Office of Mental Health, the Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance, the Office of Children and Family Services, and many more,” he said. “On any day some of us will be at our desks all day while others are traveling two hours for a service call to keep a program operational.”

With multiple reporting lines, different rules, and the required fast pace of the IT world, members may not always recognize they need help or know what options are available to them, Ford said.



Working through the PEF/ITS Health & Safety Committee, Lal said the goal has been to ensure members are aware of these realities and empowered to deal with them before they escalate. The committee offers training on ergonomics, stress, and safe driving, aimed at supporting healthier and safer workplaces.

“Our Health & Safety Committee offers this course and works with other contract-supported programs, like the Employee Assistance Program, to aid our members and move toward a healthier work environment,” he said.

Lal summed it up well: “Over time, unmanaged stress can negatively affect both personal wellbeing and job performance.”

*Editor's note: PEF members who work for any agency and are experiencing occupational stress are encouraged to reach out to their union steward, who may direct them to a local health and safety committee, if one exists. If it doesn't, members should contact PEF Health & Safety at [healthandsafety@pef.org](mailto:healthandsafety@pef.org) and consult this [Factsheet](#) for helpful information and resources.*



Members of the extended Reid family, along with PEF leaders, pose for a photograph outside the New York State Senate on May 19, 2026.

# State Senate honors late PEF member and civil rights leader

By **NAJEE WALKER**

At a press conference on May 19, friends and family members of the late Dorothy E. Reid gathered at the State Capitol in Albany to honor the long time PEF member and original plaintiff of *Brown v. Board of Education*. Reid passed away in September 2025 at the age of 88.

PEF Vice President Bruce Giddings described Reid’s bravery at age 14 as she stood up for equal rights by going on strike as a student and becoming the plaintiff of *Davis v. Prince Edward County School Board*. That case and three others would later form the foundation of *Brown v. Board of Education*, the 1954 Supreme Court decision that outlawed segregation in U.S. public schools.

“She helped change the course of educational history in this country,” said VP Giddings. “But Dorothy Reid’s commitment to service did not end there. Time and again, throughout her 88 years, she answered the call to serve others. For 28 years, she dedicated herself to the people of New York State.”

When she moved from Virginia to New York, Reid obtained her nursing degree from Brooklyn Community College and went on to work for the Office of Mental Health—then known as the Department of Mental Health Services—as a safety officer, social worker, case manager, and program director at Creedmoor Psychiatric Center.

Reid was an active PEF member and a pillar of her community.

**Black History is PEF History**

**Dorothy E. Reid**  
1937-2025

*"My mother's legacy will never ever go in vain. Her story has become a part of history."*  
- Bruce Reid, PEF Vice President (2002)

*From Q&A with the full story: Legacy of former PEF member lives on in history*



Charles Reynolds, Dorothy Reid's son.

"I believe that Dorothy Reid knew then, what we know now: That the fight for civil rights, for equal rights and the fight for labor rights was not going to end with that Supreme Court decision," said PEF Region 9 Coordinator Gabriela Franklyn. "So, she continued to advocate for civil rights. For education. For equal rights. And for workers, including her fellow PEF members."

Renee Reid is Dorothy Reid's daughter. She is a PEF steward who works as a parole officer for the Department of Corrections and Community Supervision. She credits her mother's example as one of the reasons she pursued public service.

Charles Reynolds, Reid's son, spoke for the family at the press conference.

"No one stands against oppression without facing risk, intimidation, and retaliation. My grandparents stood firm and endured the consequences," said Reynolds, who described how difficult it was after Brown for many Black Americans to get

educated. "Imagine parents forced to send their children to neighboring counties just to receive an education, or teachers losing their livelihoods—though some bravely continued to teach in homes and churches."

Reynolds closed the conference by honoring his aunts, Inez, Bertha and Jacqueline, who stood alongside their sister during the student strike in 1951, and throughout the trial.

After the press conference, State Senator Robert Jackson invited Renee, Charles, and the rest of the family into the Senate chamber to witness the introduction of a legislative resolution honoring Dorothy E. Reid. Senators Jamaal Bailey, Cordell Cleare, Leroy Comrie, Shelley Mayer and Lea Webb spoke on the floor in support of the resolution.

It reads, in part:

"WHEREAS, her courageous stand at such a young age exemplified a profound commitment to justice and equality, inspiring generations and leaving an indelible mark on the fight for civil rights; and... WHEREAS, She was a source of unwavering love, wisdom, and strength, remembered as a guiding light, a steadfast advocate for justice, and a compassionate presence in the lives of her family, friends, and community; ... RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to honor the life and legacy of Dorothy E. Reid, recognizing her extraordinary contributions to civil rights and public service, and commemorating her role in the 72nd Anniversary of Brown v. Board of Education."



# 10 students awarded PEF Joseph Scacalossi Scholarships

By **NAJEE WALKER**

The PEF Joseph Scacalossi Scholarship was first introduced in 1988 following the passing of a PEF member who worked at the Department of Labor in Manhattan. In his memory, the scholarship helps children, stepchildren, and wards of active, retired or deceased PEF members finance their education.

This year, 158 applications were received. Ten students were selected by the PEF Scholarship Committee, chaired by PEF Vice President Bruce Giddings. The other Scholarship Committee members include Rudy Arias, a program specialist at OMH in Region 8, Mario Chiarello, an IT specialist with OITS in Region 8, and Karen Tully, a senior attorney with the Department of State in Region 8.

Each scholarship recipient will receive \$1,000 per year to help cover the costs of their undergraduate degree. Congratulations to all the students!



**Iris Auyeung** is a graduating senior from Bronx High School of Science. Iris earned several awards for essay writing, debate and volunteer service. She was honored as a John Locke Institute Global Essay Completion Finalist after finishing in the top 2 percent of essay submissions out of 60,000 global entries. She was also one of 100 mentors in the Road to Literacy program. She was honored by Senator John Liu with a NYS Senate 16th Senate District Volunteer Service Award.

Iris focused on justice and journalism during high school, serving as Founder and President of the Equity Learning Nonprofit Organization to improve access to education for immigrants, the Finance Officer for the NYC Youth Journalism Coalition, and an Advocacy Leader for the Indigenous Justice Coalition. She was also Team Director of the Varsity Speech and Debate team and Copy Chief and Editor of the school newspaper.

Iris was also involved for many years at several local churches, including as a camp counselor. She raised money through the Ronald McDonald House for Families with Children Battling Cancer.

She will be attending Cornell University in Ithaca.

**Luke Buonocore** is a graduating senior from Pascack Hills High School in Montauk, N.J. Luke received many scholarly honors in high school, including induction into both the National Honor Society and High Honor Roll for maintaining a high-grade point average as well as the Spanish National Honor Roll. He also received the Spanish Seal of Bilingualism from the New Jersey Department of Education.

When he was not busy with his studies, Luke captained the soccer team and participated for three years on the indoor and outdoor track and field squads. He was also a member of Ski, Chess and Criminology clubs.

Luke was a frequent volunteer at Our Lady of Mercy Parish, including as a faith formation leader and Bible camp counselor. Luke will be attending Boston University.



**Evan Burns** is graduating from Duaneburg Jr./Sr. High School in Delanson, N.Y. He is a recipient of several academic awards, including induction into the Duaneburg National Honor Society, and received an Outstanding Achievement award in Computer Science from the Rochester Institute of Technology. He also received an award from the Western Athletic Conference as an All-Star Defender on the Duaneburg High School soccer team.

Evan's two loves are sports and robotics. He played five seasons on the varsity soccer team, three years as part of the Track and Field team and three years as part of Duaneburg Robotics Club. He also volunteered as an assistant soccer coach for the Duaneburg American Youth Soccer Organization and was an assistant mentor at the Schoharie Mohawk Initiative for Science and Technology.

He also volunteered doing home repairs in his community and was an avid Cub Scout, participating in community service and Veterans Day activities.

Evan will be attending SUNY Polytechnic Institute in Utica.



**Jordan DuBray** is a graduating senior from Massena Senior High School in Massena, N.Y. Jordan achieved High Honor Roll by maintaining an academic average above 92. She also received awards for excelling in choir and acting.

Her commitment to music and theatre shines in her long tenure as part of her school's musical theatre, where she eventually became President. She also became Vice President of the Student Council and Women's Choir. Jordan participated as a student teacher at Tap to Toe Studio of Dance and at Sunmount as a musical entertainer.

When not dancing, singing or acting, Jordan volunteered at Vacation Bible School and other programs which prepared students for school.

She will be attending SUNY Plattsburgh.

**Nathaniel Lindh** is a graduating senior from Duanesburg Jr./Sr. High School. Nathaniel achieved high honors as an athlete during his high school career. He received the Varsity Scholar Athlete award for maintaining a grade point average above 90 while playing a varsity sport. He was awarded Most Valuable Player of Cross Country and represented Duanesburg at a Sports Leadership Conference.

Nathaniel was Class President from 2022 until graduation. He was a Track and Cross Country Captain and a group leader at Princetown Youth Group. Additionally, he became Captain of the soccer team and President of the band club.

Nathaniel was very involved in his community, volunteering at the Ronald McDonald House, Red Cross, and Regional Food Banks. He was also active at Princetown Church, delivering meals to homebound church members, donating toys to families in need, and operating video livestreams for the church.

Nathaniel will be attending Nazareth University.



**Samuel Logvin** is a graduating senior from Sanford H. Calhoun High School in Merrick, N.Y. He is a high achieving student, receiving awards for Excellence in English and Social Studies. He was also recognized by the Thespian Honor Society for achievement in theatre.

Samuel spent much of his time in high school serving as Member, Chair, Vice President and President of the B'nai B'rith Youth Organization, an Actor, Shop Foreman and Supervisor of the Calhoun High School On Tour Company, and a member of Junior Varsity and Varsity Volleyball. After school he spent his time acting in community theatre, Halloween festivals, and was a founding member of a local history club.

Samuel will be attending The State University of New York at Buffalo.



**Fiona Longacker** graduated from Schuylerville Central in Schuylerville, N.Y. She is currently attending the University of Delaware. As a high school student, Fiona achieved outstanding grades, earning her induction into the National Honor Society and an award from Schuylerville High School as a Top Graduate. She is currently enrolled as a member of the University of

Delaware Honors College for high grade point average and extracurricular achievements.

As a high school student, Fiona became President of the Schuylerville High School Symphonic Band, Team Captain as a Varsity Cheerleader, President of the Mock Trial club, and was involved in the Spanish Club and Student Council.

Fiona followed the music as much as possible during her high school career. She spent time volunteering her musical talents at the Saratoga Youth Symphony Benefit Concert, the Lake George Community Band, the Old Song Music Festival and the Castleton College Music Festival.

Her freshman year of college, Fiona was a founding member of the Kappa Delta Sorority, a member of the University of Delaware Wildlife Society, and this summer works with the NYS Office for Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation.



**Kyle Manny** is a graduate of Troy High School in Troy, N.Y. He is currently attending Russell Sage College. As a high school student, Kyle received the Edward C. Picken, Saint Michael's Book and Senator Jacob C. Ashby Service in Action Award for Academic and Athletic excellence.

When not focused on his studies, Kyle was involved in high school sports as Captain of the Varsity Soccer team, and member of both the Track and Field and Indoor Track teams.

He gave back to his community by volunteering for the Troy Turkey Trot, the Boy Scouts of America and St. Anthony's church. He was also involved in showing Troy High School spirit by becoming a tour guide for new students during orientation.



**Vivan Nirelli** graduated from Iroquois High School in Elma, N.Y. As a high school student, Fiona achieved outstanding grades in both Spanish and French, earning her the Student of the Quarter for World Language and the NYS Seal of Biliteracy. She also received awards from the Rochester Institute for Technology for high academic achievement and the Coaches' Award in Field Hockey.

Award in Field Hockey.

As a high school student, Vivian became President of the Culture Club and was a member of the Key Club and National Honor Society.

Vivian spent much of her high school academic career involved in her community, volunteering at Danny's Helping Hands, the Community Food Bank, Vacation Bible School, and other organizations, including the Girl Scouts for 13 years. Additionally, she served as a coach to younger girls to teach field hockey at Iroquois Field Hockey Camp.

Vivian will be attending SUNY Geneseo.



**Kailey Paul** is graduating from the LaSalle Institute. As a student, Kailey achieved Gold Honor at LaSalle, maintaining a grade point average above 95 every year. She also was inducted into the National Honor Society.

She competed in horseback riding competitions and won several awards from 2023-2025, including the Sportsmanship Award at the National Horse Show in Kentucky, and silver medals from the United States Hunter Jumper Association. She also played Varsity Lacrosse at LaSalle.

Kailey was well-known in her community as an Ambassador for Make-A-Wish Northeastern New York and Vermont, the Albany Medical Hospital Foundation and Melodies Center, and the Kindness Project. She served as a guest speaker to promote the organization's goals and assisted with fundraising.

Kailey will be attending Elon University in North Carolina.



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The deadline to [apply](#) is **Aug. 31, 2026**.

You must complete the [FAFSA](#) and [TAP](#) applications each year you are applying for aid.

Call the Higher Education Services Corporation (HESC) directly for financial aid assistance or general questions at 1-888-697-4372 or visit the [HESC website](#) for more resources.

*Other scholarships are available for PEF members and their dependents. [Click here to visit PEF's scholarship page](#) and if your Region or Division is offering one that we don't know about, reach out to us at [Communicator@pef.org](mailto:Communicator@pef.org).*



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# RETIREEES IN ACTION: AFT plans to grow retiree engagement taking shape!

By **JIM CARR - President, PEF Statewide Retirees**

As the Statewide President of PEF Retirees, I sit on the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) Retirees Public Policy Committee. In this issue, I share with you an example of some of the work we do at AFT. Last month I wrote about the importance of staying informed and engaged in the political process: This month I'm sharing the AFT Retirees 2025-2026 Action Plan Draft designed to grow retiree engagement. This is an evolving plan developed over the last two years by the AFT Retirees PPC. Read the excerpt and share with members and retirees!

## **AFT Retirees PPC 2025-2026 DRAFT Action Plan Outline**

### **Objective**

This plan is intended to guide the AFT Retirees PPC in executing their charge of growing retiree engagement across the nation and utilizing the leadership of local retiree activists to help locals and state affiliates meet the needs of their members – both in-service and retired.

*Goal 1 - Increase retiree engagement and activism in coordination with in-service locals and state federations.*

How will we achieve this goal?

- AFT Retirees PPC Members will hold planning meetings with in-service leadership of locals and/or state federation by the end of May 2025.
- AFT Retirees PPC Members will contact retiree leaders from locals across the state on an ongoing basis to facilitate retiree member engagement and to better understand member

priorities wherever possible.

- In collaboration with in-service leadership, AFT Retirees PPC Members will identify the best time to conduct an annual retiree membership drive, if this practice is not already in place, at their local and/or state affiliate.
- AFT Retirees PPC Members will encourage retiree locals to utilize creative methods to engage and develop individual retiree activists, including:
  - Utilize more virtual options for participation
  - Celebrate union history and milestones of locals and state federations
  - Recognition of individual retirees for years of service and activism, etc.

*Goal 2 - Improve Retiree Data and Communication*

How will we achieve this goal?

- Working with staff from the AFT Retirees and AFT Membership, Data and Analytics Departments, the PPC will develop best-practices to improve retiree data and track activist engagement, including collaboration with in-service data leads to ensure proper handling of retiree data.
- AFT Retirees program staff will offer virtual and in-person training for retiree membership chairs/secretaries on data collection and list maintenance.
- PPC Members will broaden the reach of their communication with retirees and pre-retirees through one-on-one phone calls and pre-retirement workshops.
- AFT Retirees program staff will hold regular virtual trainings on a range of topics that are of interest to retired members.

*Goal 3 – Fight back on attacks from the Federal Government through AFT National Actions. Oppose spending cuts that hurt our members including cuts to Medicaid, Social Security, Medicare, Department of Education, as well as attempts to expand vouchers, eliminate collective bargaining rights, etc.*

How will we achieve this goal?

- The AFT Retirees PPC and program staff will collaborate with AFT National leadership to launch a new contribution fund that will be used to develop retiree programming and enable our retirees to have a voice in the public forum.
- PPC members will collaborate with in-service leadership and partner organizations (list below) to host and amplify rallies, demonstrations and events that oppose policies and actions that are detrimental to AFT members.
- PPC members will recruit more retiree members to join the AF Terburners and to opt into communications from AFT National.

*Goal 4 - Political activism - Facilitate AFT retiree activism in 2025 and 2026 primary and general elections and position our program to continue increasing AFT retiree activism in the 2026 general elections.*

How will we achieve this goal?

- PPC members and program staff will work with in-service leadership and the AFT Political Department to identify and engage member activists in key race districts as locals and state federations begin making endorsements.
- PPC Members will survey local retiree leaders regarding the interests and engagement of their members.
- PPC Members will recruit more retiree members to join the AF Terburners and to opt into communications from AFT National.

Partner Organizations:

- AFL-CIO and other unions
- ARA
- Progressive groups i.e., Public Citizen, ACLU, etc.
- Social Security Works
- Jobs With Justice
- Local Democratic Clubs and politically aligned groups
- Coalitional Campaigns i.e. "Hands Off"
- Faith-based groups
- NAACP
- LCLAA
- CBTU

# 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.

Charles Browning is a senior attorney at the New York State Insurance Fund in Endicott. To obtain a donation form, email [PersonnelOps@nysif.com](mailto:PersonnelOps@nysif.com).

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

Dale Dils is a correctional facility food administrator 2 at Collins Correctional Facility in Collins.

Angelia Doll is a taxpayer services specialist 1 at the Department of Tax and Finance in Albany.

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](mailto:MVPersonnel@omh.ny.gov).

JP Fried is a registered nurse 1 at SUNY Upstate in Syracuse. Email [leaves@upstate.edu](mailto:leaves@upstate.edu) to obtain a donation form.

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](mailto:BSCBenefitsAdmin@ogs.ny.gov) to obtain a donation form.

Malkiyah Goldberg is a project manager 3 at the Office of Information Technology Services in Albany. Email [HR.LeaveManagement@its.ny.gov](mailto:HR.LeaveManagement@its.ny.gov) for 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.

Bobbi Hawa is a registered nurse 1 at SUNY Upstate in Syracuse. Email [leaves@upstate.edu](mailto:leaves@upstate.edu) to obtain a donation form.

Kathleen Hill is a registered nurse 1 at SUNY Upstate in Syracuse. Email [leaves@upstate.edu](mailto:leaves@upstate.edu) to obtain a donation form.

Gretchen Hoffman is a registered nurse 2 at SUNY Upstate in Syracuse. Email [leaves@upstate.edu](mailto: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](mailto: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.

Ina Maynor is a rehab assistant 2 at Capital District Psychiatric Center in Albany. Contact [Giles.Morrill@omh.ny.gov](mailto:Giles.Morrill@omh.ny.gov) or [Jamillah.Austin@omh.ny.gov](mailto:Jamillah.Austin@omh.ny.gov) to obtain a donation form.

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

Maliyka A. Muhammad is disability analyst 2 at the Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance in Manhattan.

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.

Jennifer Silvanic-Lopes is a Labor Service Representative at the Department of Labor in Endicott. Email [Labor.sm.personnel.leaves@labor.ny.gov](mailto:Labor.sm.personnel.leaves@labor.ny.gov) to obtain a donation form.

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

Donna Stevens is a Registered Nurse at the Capital District Psychiatric Center. Email [Giles.Morrill@omh.ny.gov](mailto:Giles.Morrill@omh.ny.gov) or [Jamillah.Austin@omh.ny.gov](mailto:Jamillah.Austin@omh.ny.gov) to obtain a donation form.

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](mailto: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.

Amy Waterman is a registered nurse 1 at SUNY Upstate in Syracuse. Email [leaves@upstate.edu](mailto:leaves@upstate.edu) to obtain a donation form.

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.



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](mailto:communicator@pef.org), or call 518-785-1900.



May 18, 2026

PEF Region 9 held a PAC meeting and a “Dine & Discussion” with area lawmakers. Thanks to Assemblymember Jonathan Jacobson, NYS Assemblymember Christopher W. Eachus and staff from the office of State Sen. James Skoufis for stopping by to talk about the importance of Tier 6 reform, a fair contract for PEF members, and keeping State workers safe and respected on the job.



May 11, 2026

PEF Region 4 Coordinator Monica Moore and Organizing Coordinator Libby Militello joined their union siblings from CSEA, United University Professions, and Police Benevolent Association of New York State for a “Cortland Works” event at SUNY Cortland.



June 4, 2026

Thank you to PEF members from around the State who couldn't make it to Albany but sent in solidarity photos for the PEF Contract Team!



May 27, 2026

Region 4 had a great night out at the Syracuse Mets game! With 70 members in attendance on the 3rd base patio, they enjoyed perfect weather, great company, and a Mets win to top it all off. Thanks to everyone who came out and made it such a fun evening!



May 17, 2026

PEF Region 9 held a PAC meeting and a "Dine & Discussion" with area lawmakers. Thanks to Assemblymember Jonathan Jacobson, NYS Assemblymember Christopher W. Eachus and staff from the office of State Sen. James Skoufis for stopping by to talk about the importance of Tier 6 reform, a fair contract for PEF members, and keeping State workers safe and respected on the job.



May 23, 2026

The PEF Statewide Women's Committee, in collaboration with the Black Caucus of PS&T and the Nurses Committee, delivered a program to members about taking care of themselves in order to take care of others. Members engaged in group discussions and activities and closed the day creating their own cup as a memento of the program. PEF Membership Benefits Program Administrator Stephanie McLean-Beathley educated attendees in person and via Zoom about the various benefits available to care for themselves and their loved ones. Plans are underway to hold similar Care Celebrations in other regions and at Convention in October!



## Letters to the Editor

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Sending letters to the editor is a powerful way for members to get answers to their questions, express their opinions, and contribute to public discourse. They can raise awareness, spark dialogue, and influence public opinion on various issues.

## We want to hear from you!

Send your letters to to [thecomunicator@pef.org](mailto:thecomunicator@pef.org). Please include your name and location. Letters may be published in upcoming issues of *the Communicator*.

