

Vol. 44

The COMMUNICATOR

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Rooted ⁱⁿ Solidarity / Rising ⁱⁿ Strength

The PEF Convention in Niagara Falls brought together members from across New York for three impactful days of solidarity, advocacy, and to chart the course for the coming year. As the falls lit up in PEF's blue and yellow, Convention featured inspiring speakers, energized union members, and positioned PEF for continuing success. Inside this issue, you will find coverage from plenary sessions, including speakers, legislative agendas, and finances.

PEF's 48th Annual Convention

Table of Contents

The President's Message	3
State of the Union: PEF must build on progress, prepare for future	4
Convention delegates: Rooted in solidarity, focused on the work ahead	8
President's Reception celebrates union to kick off Convention	10
Democracy's 'biggest defenses': Public service and a strong labor movement	12
PEF's finances remain strong as membership grows	13
Convention speakers rally delegates to action	14
Political action gets results: VP DiAntonio shares legislative accomplishments	16
Nurses display union strength, strategy, and the healing power of laughter	18
Veterans honor service, share 9/11 memories	20
Convention workshops cover workplace assaults, lesser-known contract benefits	21
Delegates surpass fundraising goal for Ronald McDonald House	22
PEF/DOCCS Labor-Management Conference focuses on new solutions to old problems	24
PEF member highlights Adirondack Park history on DEC podcast	27
A busy year for the PEF Hispanic Committee – with more to come	30
ITS team climbs 42 floors for Tunnel to Towers charity	32
Time off to vote on Election Day is a legal right	34
PEF encourages members to get involved and vote	35
Applications open for several college aid programs	36
Investing in Women, Building Union Leaders: Cynthia Walkers's Summer School Experience	38
RETIREES IN ACTION: Get informed, get to the polls, make a difference	40
Your fellow members need your leave donations	42
Photo Highlights	43

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The President's Message By WAYNE SPENCE



Delegates deliver at PEF Convention 2026

More than 700 dedicated PEF members – the largest gathering since before the Covid pandemic – convened in Niagara Falls Oct. 18-21, 2026, to conduct the [business of the union](#).

This issue of the Communicator covers all the significant speeches and events that took place – from my 12th [State of the Union address](#), to debate over PEF's [Federal and State Legislative Agendas](#), to [workshops](#) about workplace assaults and lesser-known Articles of the Contract, to Resolutions that impact PEF's advocacy and policies, and so much more.

As always, the work was relentless and I thank every Delegate for taking time out of their busy lives to help shape the future of this union. I always leave Convention fired up to advance PEF's mission, which I have directed every PEF department to keep top of mind in everything they do: "PEF exists to promote and protect the welfare of its members regarding all terms and conditions of employment."

As I said in my address to delegates, now that our largest professional, scientific, and technical bargaining unit has a five-year contract, the most important thing we will do in the years ahead is enforce that contract. And that's where every member can play a role. If you see something that is unfair or unsafe at work, tell your steward, or tell your field representative. If you don't know who to contact, [call your regional office](#). This union exists to represent you and improve your life at work.

Two final notes: First, please [make a plan to vote](#). Early voting is underway now and Election Day is Nov. 3. Vote for candidates who share your union values and will support policies that benefit working families. Second, if you're like me and don't always have time to read long articles, you'll notice a new "Listen" button at the top of every Communicator story. Click it and the story will be read to you. We'll be exploring other new ways for you to stay informed about union news as 2026 wraps up and 2027 begins.

As always, thank you for being a PEF member and for the work you do for your fellow New Yorkers.

In Unity,

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

Wayne Spence
PEF President

State of the Union

PEF President Wayne Spence



State of the Union: PEF must build on progress, prepare for future

By KATE STICKLES

President Wayne Spence delivered a clear message in his State of the Union address at Convention on Oct. 19, 2026: PEF made meaningful progress in the last year, but protecting those gains and making new ones will take continued solidarity, vigilance and member involvement.

The president highlighted contract negotiations, pension reform, workplace safety, and efforts to protect public service.

"This is my 12th State of the Union address," President Spence said. "When I became your president in 2015, I understood the responsibility you were placing in my hands. Eleven years later, I still feel that responsibility every day.

"This is our largest Convention delegation since before the pandemic," he continued. "The state of our union is strong. We are in good shape, and we have real accomplishments to be proud of."

Keeping it strong, however, means ensuring that contractual wins are enforced, workplace concerns are addressed, and public employees have a voice in decisions affecting their future.

A strong contract

President Spence gave the membership credit for ratifying the 2026-2031 contract for PEF's largest bargaining unit, Professional, Scientific, and Technical (PS&T) employees. The contract provides annual raises of 4.5%, 4%, 3.5%, 3%, and 3% - which compounds to 19.3% over the five-year term. It also continues the annual \$600 higher education differential, increases location and inconvenience pay, adds a new hazard duty bonus pay for some members, and paves the way for PEF

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Rising
Strength

to bring dental and vision benefits in-house using \$40 million of seed money provided by the State.

"Do you know how we got this done?" he asked delegates. "We did that! All of you did that. We did it collectively."

Throughout the bargaining process, there were times when President Spence spoke directly to Gov. Kathy Hochul. And through it all there was the incredible work of the Contract Team under the leadership of Chair and Vice President Darlene Williams and the support and guidance of Chief Negotiator Mark Richard.

"Every agreement takes hard work and depends on the strength of our membership," he said. "Whether you voted yes or no, you should be proud that your union values your voice. Members made the contract possible, and members decided

our direction and that is union democracy. Now, we have to go enforce what we have won.”

President Spence urged members not to let management weaken contract provisions, including employee organizational leave and time needed to investigate concerns and pursue grievances. He also said PEF must keep the pressure on the State after receiving the results of the compensation study they must now contractually deliver by Jan. 30, 2027.

“We are going to examine the results closely,” he said. “We’re going to share what they mean for our members. If necessary, we’re going to organize for the salary changes that we need. If the state tries to water down the response, you will hear from us and together we will be ready to act.”

Safety must come first

Pay and benefits matter, but employees must also be safe at work.

“What good is a contract if we don’t live to spend it and benefit from it?” President Spence said, describing ongoing concerns at numerous state agencies, where security shortages and serious incidents continue to impact members. At correctional and other facilities run by OMH, OPWDD and OCFS, PEF is pressing for adequate security measures, including barriers, reliable personal alarms, appropriate protective equipment, clinical support, violence prevention, and action to address exposures.

The president shared stories of members violently attacked at psychiatric centers and correctional facilities and Department of Transportation members working alongside speeding and/or distracted motorists in work zones, all at risk of injury or death.

“The state has a duty to provide a safe workplace, and we will keep insisting that it meets that duty,” he said.

It’s not just physical violence or dangers: workplace bullying, harassment, and retaliation also hurt members.

“On September 8, we stood outside the Department of Financial Services in New York City because members and union staff had reported bullying, intimidation, and retaliation,” President Spence said.

The union debuted its 20-foot-tall inflatable bull, S.T.O.M.P. (Stop Treating Our Members Poorly), after jumping through rigorous permitting hoops, a strong visual that PEF won’t stand for bullying.

“We had fellow unions, community allies, elected officials, and PEF members from across New York City that came out there and stood with us,” he said. “For a member who is afraid to speak up, seeing that support matters. It’s not easy to stand up to bullying when the bully is your boss.”

President Spence shared his own past retaliation case from two decades ago, when as a Long Island parole officer he was suspended without pay and the state attempted to fire him after he testified at a legislative hearing.

“I pursued a federal case because I believe that speaking honestly about public service should not cost a public servant their career,” he said. “I understand when people try to bully you, intimidate you, and I’m not going to sit by and let it happen to anybody.”

Fair hiring

President Spence also raised concerns about changes to state hiring practices stemming from the NY HELPS program, including the use of resume-based assessments and automated scoring.

“One of the most consequential issues we face is the future of New York state’s civil service system,” he said. “During the staffing crisis, PEF proposed a temporary hiring approach to bring qualified people into essential jobs. But the state response has grown far beyond the temporary approach that we advocated for.”

PEF supports faster testing, accessible exams and better recruitment, but warns against changes that could undermine equal opportunity or make hiring decisions harder to scrutinize. President Spence stressed the importance of representation and a secure future for PEF members hired under the NY HELPS program.

“Our concerns are with the state’s policy choices and whether they preserve fairness for everyone,” he said. “Merit and fitness must remain central to any Civil Service transformation. We cannot modernize our way back to a patronage system.”

Pension reform

Retirement security was another focus of the President’s State of the Union address.

Key goals include restoring the 2% pension calculation after 20 years of service, allowing Tier 5 and 6 members to retire at age 55 with 30 years of service, and reducing early-retirement penalties to a maximum of 27%.

“A comptroller’s report says that 60% of the state workforce is now Tier 6,” President Spence said. “On March 8, more than 15,000 union members and allies came to Albany to demand that New York Fix Tier 6. PEF helped bring that strength into the streets.”

As a result of that advocacy, Tier 6 members will now [pay less into their pension each paycheck](#), depending on their salary range. PEF’s push for pension reform is part of a broader effort to make public service a viable long-term career, recognize the contributions of workers, and ensure employees can retire with dignity and financial security.

Political strength

The impact of looming federal funding cuts is why the success of PEF’s Committee on Political Education (COPE) is crucial. COPE is a federal lobbying fund administered by



State of the Union





Convention delegates: Rooted in solidarity, focused on the work ahead

By KATE STICKLES

More than 700 delegates gathered in Niagara Falls Oct. 18–21 for PEF's 48th annual Convention, approving legislative agendas, reviewing union finances and acting on resolutions.

Vice President and Convention Chair Darlene Williams opened plenary by highlighting PEF's workplace advocacy and contract ratification, approved by 88% of voters.

"The theme this year is Rooted in Solidarity, Rising in Strength," she said. "I want you to think about what those words really mean. When we left last year's Convention in Lake Placid, we returned to our workplaces with renewed energy and a new purpose with a reason to commit to standing together.

"Look what we have done since then," she said. "We confronted workplace violence in psychiatric facilities, better staffing and respect for our members. We addressed overwhelming caseloads and workplace concerns. We continued to fight for members in DOCCS, OMH, and OCFS, and every agency we represent."

The greatest accomplishment?

"Our contract," said VP Williams, who also chaired the Contract Team. "I traveled the state talking to members. Not every conversation was easy. Some members were happy, some were frustrated, and some were downright angry. What made me proud was that we could agree to disagree. We always remember we belong to the same union."

Vice President Williams expressed hope that delegates would walk away with a renewed sense of solidarity and purpose.

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"I want you leaving with a toolbox overfilled with knowledge, resources, and confidence," she added. "When someone asks you, what is PEF about, let them know we are here, we are organized, and let them know we are rooted in solidarity and rising in strength!"

Speakers bring thanks, inspiration

Several [guest speakers](#) took the podium on both days of plenary, including AFT President Randi Weingarten, New York Attorney General Letitia James, [Keynote Speaker Skye Perryman](#) of Democracy Forward, U.S. Rep. Tim Kennedy, Western New York Area Labor Federation President Denise Abbott, as well as at the President's Reception on Sunday, where New York State Comptroller Thomas DiNapoli spoke.

State of the Union

President Wayne Spence delivered a clear message in his [State of the Union address](#) at Convention: the union has made meaningful progress in the last year, but protecting those gains and making new ones will take continued solidarity, vigilance and member involvement.

He spoke at length about the compensation and benefits secured in the five-year contract ratified by the Professional, Scientific, and Technical Unit, but made clear that PEF won't rest on that accomplishment.

"Every agreement takes hard work and depends on the strength of our membership," he said. "Whether you voted yes or no, you should be proud that your union values your voice. Members made the contract possible, and members decided our direction and that is union democracy. Now, we have to go enforce what we have won."

Legislative agendas approved

"Whether you love or hate politics ... politics determine what we earn, what our pensions are worth, whether our agencies are funded, staffed, or closed," said Vice President and Statewide

Political Action Committee Chair. "Politics matter to all of us, in every title and at every worksite."

Convention delegates set the [federal and state legislative agendas](#), one of the most important tasks the body undertakes.

PEF is fiscally strong

VP DiAntonio, who at President Spence's request assumed the duties of the [Secretary-Treasurer's office](#) following the retirement of Joe Donahue, reported that PEF remains in a strong financial position, with net assets up by \$2,108,571 and income from membership dues rising by approximately \$3.4 million.

Delegates vote on 14 resolutions

With a packed schedule, delegates acted on 14 out of 40 resolutions, about everything from Artificial Intelligence regulation to affordability issues to unsafe caseloads and NY HELPS. The PEF Legal Department is summarizing the actions taken and will share their report with the membership when it is complete.

President's Reception celebrates union to kick off Convention

By **NAJEE WALKER**

Every year after PEF delegates arrive in the city in New York that will host them for Convention, the union invites delegates to a welcome reception hosted by PEF President Wayne Spence.

The gathering also serves as a chance for members to share ideas before convening on Monday, and features brief welcome remarks from the president, as well as invited guest, New York State Comptroller Tom DiNapoli.

DiNapoli praised PEF leaders and the members for reaching an historic high: 65,000 members in all units across the state of New York.

"PEF numbers are stronger than ever and because of the strength of this union, you have had historic victories in terms of wages, benefits and working conditions," said DiNapoli. "And let me just say, to all of you, thank you for your public service!"

DiNapoli also thanked retirees for their efforts in staying engaged with the union and took a moment to recognize the PEF members who work at the Office of the State Comptroller.

"I see firsthand just how important the work of PEF members is," DiNapoli said. "I see it every day at the comptroller's office and I am very proud of the fact that we have a strong contingent of PEF members."

DiNapoli congratulated members on the ratification of the new five-year collective bargaining agreement with New York State and for pushing for changes to the pension plan. He recognized PEF's activity throughout the state on several of the issues that matter to members.

"You have been standing up against bullying in the workplace. No one should be intimidated in the workplace," he said. "And PEF is always the first voice to say that public services should be provided by public employees, not contracted out."

Comptroller DiNapoli shared some good news about the pension with members. With more than \$300 billion invested in the New York State retirement system, DiNapoli said that the defined benefit plan that so many members rely on is doing great.

"We have the best funded public retirement system in the United States of America," said DiNapoli. "We are 97% funded. We have a fully funded pension plan, and we work hard to keep it that way."

While focusing on this year's convention theme, Rooted in Solidarity, Rising in Strength, the comptroller reminded PEF members that unity will be critical for the fights ahead.

"President John Kennedy once said those who would destroy or limit the rights of organized labor, those who would cripple collective bargaining or prevent organization of the unorganized, do a disservice to democracy," said DiNapoli. "I think that's something we need to keep in mind. Unions are a strength in our democracy. And the more unions we have, the more working people are represented by unions, that strengthens our democracy."

To close his remarks, DiNapoli called on members to do their best to work through complex issues during convention, to remember why they fight, and to stay unified.

"I want you to come through this convention more unified. Let us know how we can work in partnership to support you and do what you need us to do to make sure New York State is the great state that we want it to be."





Rooted in Solidarity, Rising in Strength

PEF's 48th Annual Convention



Democracy's 'biggest defenses': Public service and a strong labor movement

By KATE STICKLES

Democracy is a kitchen-table issue — inseparable from affording groceries, getting health care and earning a fair paycheck, Skye Perryman, Founder and CEO of [Democracy Forward](#), told delegates in this year's Convention keynote address.

"You can't have a conversation about affordability without having a conversation about democracy, but you can't have a conversation about democracy without talking about and working for the real-life things that impact people," she said.

Perryman said Americans' top concerns are the economy and affordability, threats to democracy, and health care. Half of Americans are extremely concerned about affording gas, and many worry about affording food.

Rising U.S. wealth inequality is straining democracy, Perryman said, pointing to Jan. 6, 2021, when the country was added to a global list of backsliding democracies.

Perryman said democracy comes under strain when governments struggle to deliver for people and economic opportunity is uneven.

The events of Jan. 6 didn't land the U.S. on the list, Perryman said. Contributing factors include a Supreme Court that more often reverses rights than protects them; a Congress international researchers call dysfunctional; and rising state and local extremism.

Perryman said deep economic divides fuel polarization and allow anti-democratic actors to exploit hardship. "Once you're in a backsliding democracy, there's a playbook that people who want to take away our rights follow," she said.

Perryman called the civil service and a strong labor movement among democracy's "biggest defenses."

"One of the biggest defenses against autocracy, one of the biggest defenses against the consolidation of power, is people like you who every day go to work to serve people, to do your job," she said.

Democracy Forward and AFT are bringing lawsuits on various fronts, but working people can make real change. Perryman said delegates' advocacy for New York public employees is bringing hope to public employees nationwide.

But solidarity's power requires action.

"Our power is not self-executing," she said. Perryman urged delegates to speak out and take extra action to stop further democratic backsliding.

*Editor's Note: Perryman's book, **Ordinary People, Extraordinary Times**, was published in August and is a New York Times bestseller. It combines personal stories with practical how-to guides that empower readers to take action in their own communities.*



PEF's finances remain strong as membership grows

By KATE STICKLES



PEF Vice President Randi DiAntonio delivered the Secretary-Treasurer's Report to delegates on Oct. 20, 2026.

Vice President Randi DiAntonio delivered this year's Secretary-Treasurer's Report to delegates after stepping into the role at the request of President Spence following the retirement of Joe Donahue. She began her speech paying tribute to the outgoing secretary-treasurer.

"Joe never lost sight of PEF's mission and vision: to organize, to build power, and to bring together the strength of our diverse membership," she said. "He approached every single budget decision, audit, and financial report with integrity and care; he always focused on how our resources could strengthen this union and best serve our members."

DiAntonio pledged to keep PEF focused on improving members' lives.

"A budget is much more than a financial document. It is a statement of values and priorities," she said. "It tells our members what we are willing to invest in, what we are prepared to protect, and how seriously we take our responsibility to weather any storms and sustain this union for the long term."

"Today, I am happy to report that PEF remains in a strong financial position," DiAntonio announced. "In fiscal year 2026, the net assets of the union increased by \$2,108,571. That is not just a financial result; it reflects disciplined and responsible oversight. Income from membership dues increased by approximately \$3.4 million, reaching approximately \$47.7 million."

Dues revenue rose with membership growth and the contractual raises that went into effect on April 1, 2025. As reported in the State of the Union, membership now exceeds pre-pandemic levels and continues to grow.

DiAntonio told delegates that total assets rose from \$39.23 million on March 31, 2025, to \$44.01 million on March 31, 2026, largely through increases in cash, cash equivalents and investments. Investment gains, including interest and dividends, totaled approximately \$1.8 million.

"Strong finances allow us to bargain from a position of strength, defend members, support health and safety initiatives, train leaders, communicate effectively, organize around shared priorities, and advocate for public policies that respect the dignity and professionalism of the workforce we represent."

Liabilities rose \$2.68 million, largely from a \$1.05 million increase in post-retirement liability and an \$847,000 increase in leases, with various regional offices requiring renewals during the fiscal year. Post-retirement costs reflect higher-than-anticipated medical and prescription claims, which drove premiums up more than 40%, as well as an increase in the number of PEF employees.

"While our costs are definitely increasing, so are our efforts to recruit and retain members, and our membership numbers reflect that," DiAntonio said. "Most importantly, we continue to be fiscally prudent. Our members deserve a union that is financially strong, politically powerful, operationally responsible, and clear in its purpose."

Editor's note: PEF's consolidated financial statements as of March 31, 2026, and 2025, along with the full auditor's report, were published in the September Communicator and can be reviewed [here](#).

Convention speakers rally delegates to action

By KATE STICKLES

"There are really only three ways that regular folks have power in America," Randi Weingarten, the president of the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), told delegates on the first day of Convention. "One way is through education, one is through having a labor movement, and the last way is through politics."



Weingarten praised PEF for a productive year, which included negotiating a five-year contract, pension improvements, and continuing the fight for dignity and respect in the workplace. She urged everyone to get involved in the process and to hit the polls in November.

"We know that no contract and no legislative session can do everything," she said. "It is something that one builds on because we have to constantly fight for a better life. That's why elections matter. We need people in Congress, and we need people in the State Legislature that are willing to fight for regular people and fight for working class people."

The American Dream is harder to achieve now than ever before, Weingarten said.

"There is a lot of anxiety, (and) not just about affordability," she said. "People are really upset about wanting to make their lives better and not seeing a way. We need to ensure the future of Social Security, we need to fix the health care system, we need to fix the immigration system. This is not radical. This is the American dream. It's about time we have a legislature here and in Washington that focuses on this in words and actions. You are not powerless."

Attorney General Letitia James

New York's strong labor movement took center stage during New York State Attorney General Letitia James' speech, too.

"I believe deeply in the right to collective bargaining," she said. "I will continue fighting against those seeking to undermine unions and weaken worker protections."

James said factions such as the Freedom Foundation are attacking the union movement and trying to turn New York into a "right-to-work" state.

"We must stand together," she said. "I will continue to fight to ensure New York remains a union town because labor is the key. Labor is a tool to address poverty and income disparity. Unions have been at the forefront of just about every big struggle."



She said this year's Convention theme, Rooted in Solidarity, Rising in Strength, is PEF's power.

"I hope you carry that spirit back to your workplaces and to your community," she said. "When PEF speaks with one voice, Albany listens."

U.S. Rep. Tim Kennedy



U.S. Rep. Tim Kennedy expressed gratitude and solidarity in his address to the delegates.

"You keep our state running, you deliver our services, protect our communities, and make sure government works for the people," he said. "Congratulations on

ratifying a new five-year contract with raises, benefits, and workplace gains that reflect what workers can accomplish when they stand together and demand a fair deal."

Kennedy said people who dedicate their careers to helping others should be able to build a stable future for themselves.

"No one should have to choose between earning a paycheck and going home safely at the end of the day," he said. "No workers should have to fight year after year for the basic protections and resources they need. At the end of the day, it comes down to a simple principle: People who do work in New York deserve a fair share of the opportunities and prosperity that you helped create."

SEIU President April Verrett

PEF's contract wins couldn't come at a more important time, said SEIU President April Verrett in a recorded message played for delegates.

"Working people are being squeezed from every single direction," she said. "The rent is just too damn high. Groceries simply cost too much. Health care and childcare are putting families in impossible situations."

She said people are left wondering whether they'll ever get ahead.

"Work should provide more than a paycheck," Verrett said. "It should provide hope, and it should provide a future. And while families are struggling to make ends meet, we're seeing attacks on the very institutions and protections that working people have fought for and depend on."

Embracing this year's Convention theme, Verrett said strength has always come from a union's willingness to stand together.

"We're fighting for three pretty simple things. Money. Power. Respect," she said. "Money to build a secure future. Power over

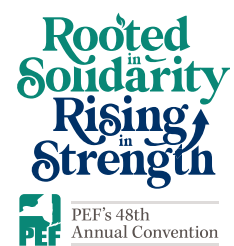
the decisions that shape our work and our lives. And respect. Respect for the essential contributions working people make every single day. Your contract victory is proof that those aren't just words, they're things we can win. Celebrate what you've accomplished. Take pride in the power that you've built."

WNYALF President Denise Abbott



Denise Abbott, president of the Western New York Area Labor Federation, shared with delegates the deep union roots of the area – from the petroleum industry to the first union drive at Starbucks to the home of the only union dues-paying NFL team, the Buffalo Bills.

"We are a union town, and solidarity runs in our blood," she said. "I hope you leave here with an extra dose of strength and unity in you."



Political action gets results: VP DiAntonio shares legislative accomplishments

By KATE STICKLES



Vice President and Statewide Political Action Committee Chair Randi DiAntonio gives a legislative update before delegates discuss and approve legislative agendas for 2027.

Political action at PEF “is not about red or blue, D or R – it’s about your paycheck, your retirement, and the people and communities we serve,” said PEF Vice President and Statewide Political Action Committee Chair Randi DiAntonio on day two of Convention.

“Whether you love or hate politics ... politics determine what we earn, what our pensions are worth, whether our agencies are funded, staffed, or closed,” she told delegates. “Politics matter to all of us, in every title and at every worksite.”

Every year, Convention delegates consider and approve PEF’s federal and state legislative agendas, one of the most important tasks the body undertakes.

“We must advocate in a bipartisan way by working with those willing to work with us,” DiAntonio said. “Our work must be strategic and tactical, grounded in our members’ interests. We don’t have the luxury of making decisions based on personal politics, we have to look at the needs of more than 3,000 titles and 65,000 members.”

Throughout the last year, PEF activists descended on Albany to testify, rally, meet with legislators, and send letters to legislators on everything from Tier 6 to safe staffing to workplace violence.

Sustained pressure and collaboration with other unions helped deliver major Tier 6 improvements this year, DiAntonio said. Union advocacy led to lowered employee pension contribution rates and compressed salary bands, putting real money back into members’ pockets. There is now a higher overtime cap in final average salary calculations for Tier 5 and 6. The union will continue to work on changing the retirement age and advocating for retirement at age 55 after 30 years of service.

PEF also worked hard to expand and pass work zone camera laws; pushed the state to open long-awaited regional, computerized civil service testing centers; and called for reform of the Humane Alternatives to Long-Term Solitary Confinement (HALT) act.

DiAntonio reported passage of the bill to allow the installation and use of body scanner technology to help prevent weapons, drugs and other contraband from getting into secure Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) facilities for at-risk youth.

“Why and how did that happen?” she asked. “It happened on the floor of Convention. It happened because one member brought forward his idea. That member saw a concern, and he stood up at the microphone in front of this body and he spoke truth to power.”

She called member Zach Swift, a children and family services specialist at OCFS, to the podium and presented him with the pen that Gov. Kathy Hochul used to sign the bill into law.

“You gave us our marching orders, and we heard you,” she said. “We advocated, and we made sure that the Legislature and the Governor heard you. You did everything I am asking all of you to do.”

Swift gave a shout-out to the OCFS statewide labor/management team, calling it a group effort.

PEF is now hoping to expand the law to install body scanners at facilities run by the Office of Mental Health, Office for People with Developmental Disabilities, Office for Addiction Services and Supports and at DOCCS parole offices.

PEF also advanced legislation to curb state contracting out,



VP DiAntonio presents OCFS member Zach Swift with the pen Gov. Kathy Hochul used to sign the bill to allow the installation and use of body scanner technology to help prevent weapons, drugs and other contraband from getting into secure OCFS facilities for at-risk youth.

require exit interviews when employees leave a State job, and impose fines for the fraudulent use of union leaders' images and messages — such as those sent by the Freedom Foundation urging union members to opt out of their union.

"We also secured a law protecting our jobs from elimination or

transfer due to AI," DiAntonio said. "We're going to have to keep going back around AI because it needs to be regulated sensibly. We want to protect not only our data, our privacy, but our clients, our jobs, and our union."

"It's been a busy year, and I'll be candid, next year is going to be busier," she said. "Federal funding reductions are going to hit New York sharply in January. When budgets tighten, public services and public workers are the first things that are threatened. So, buckle up."

She closed her speech with a call to action.

"Vote your family values. Vote your paycheck. Vote your pension. That's my ask," DiAntonio said. "Being union means showing up. Being union means speaking up. And on Election Day, being union means voting."

You can view the [federal](#) and [state](#) legislative agendas on the PEF website and in the PEF app.

Nurses display union strength, strategy, and the healing power of laughter

By **NAJEE WALKER**

PEF delegates who work as nurses at OMH, OPWDD, DOCCS and several other agencies attended a lunch hour workshop hosted by the Statewide Nurses' Committee during Convention this year. Each year, the lunch focuses on bringing new information or helpful tools to nurses working for the state, who often work long hours and in dangerous situations.

"You are all leaders here and as President Spence said during his State of the Union address, we're doing great," said PEF Statewide Nurses' Committee Co-Chair Amy Lee Pacholk. "And we're doing great because you're participating."

Pacholk asked that the nurses in the room continue to stay involved, especially during the annual lobbying day each spring, when nurses travel to Albany for two days of education on the issues facing nurses and visit New York State Senators and Assemblymembers to share their stories and get those issues addressed.

Pacholk also introduced Nurse Consultant Debbie Egel. Egel told attendees to keep filling out Protest of Assignment (POA) forms whenever they have a complaint to log with management about something they are tasked to do. PEF uses those forms to support nurses faced with hazardous working conditions. The data gathered allows the union to make the case to management about unsafe working conditions, and to protect the nursing licenses of members.

Egel said that every leader in the room should not only be filling out POA forms whenever necessary, but encouraging others to do so as well.

"This tool is only useful if you're actually using it," said Egel. "If you're unsafe at work, your fellow nurses and those you're taking care of are also unsafe. If you're short-staffed, that affects everyone. You need to get together and file these POAs, document and be fearless. Hospitals and institutions cannot run without you."

Both Egel and Pacholk told PEF nurses that they would be working hard to change the dynamic of how PE nurses organize going forward and introduced two new Nurse Coordinators as part of that change.

India Walton is one of two Nurse Coordinators hired by PEF. She is based in Buffalo, and will cover nurses in Region 1 through 8. She said she is a fierce advocate and is prepared to fight for whatever nurses need.

"I'm really excited to be in this position. I have worked as a nurse for over 20 years," Walton said. "I love to stay in the streets and in somebody's face about what's right. I believe that this is the right thing to do and we have every right to do it."

The second nurse coordinator, Mariel Hernandez-Abuelsaad, will cover Regions 9 through 12 and will work out of the Region 9 office in Poughkeepsie. Hernandez-Abuelsaad is a registered nurse who knows firsthand the dangers of the job and the need for POAs.

"I know what it means to file a POA. My previous union pushed a big campaign to get safe staffing ratios put into our contract," she said. "Working with you all, and Debbie Egel, we're going to be able to really put some teeth to all the things we're doing. We're going to do great things together!"

To conclude the luncheon, Pacholk introduced Nancy Norton, a registered nurse and award-winning comedian who uses her unique blend of nursing and comedic styling to teach healthcare workers how to stay healthy through humor. Norton believes that in addition to lowering stress hormones, laughter can prevent burnout, help with team bonding, and improve job retention.

"I was destined into nursing," said Norton. "My mom was a nurse. My dad was an alcoholic, so I had a combo platter. Seriously, I am a fifth-generation nurse. My mother, her mother, and her mother, and so on."

Norton's jokes hit on many of the things that nurses often push to the back of their minds, including the harsh realities of codependency, alcoholism, and family drama due to the working conditions nursing can sometimes inflict. However, she said that laughter can bring people back together.

"You were all talking about filing out POAs and staying united earlier, and that really fired me up," she said. "I'm not even in your union and I'm filling out a POA right now. You got into this line of work to save lives, and I got out of it for the same reason! I'm here to heal with humor."



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Veterans honor service, share 9/11 memories

By KATE STICKLES

The annual Veterans' Luncheon at Convention began with the National Anthem and the solemn [Missing Man Table](#) reading honoring U.S. service members who are fallen, missing in action (MIA), or prisoners of war (POW), followed by remarks from President Wayne Spence and attendee reflections on September 11th.

Most veterans who were on the ground during World War II and many who served in Vietnam are no longer with us, President Spence said, and following the attacks on Sept. 11, many Americans left their jobs and joined the service.

"I was born toward the end of Vietnam," the president said, "but there was an ending, there were conflicts here and there, but young people today say all they've known is war. It was shocking to hear that."

Today, people are divided, even among the veteran community, he said.

"Many times, when we have a common enemy, we come together," President Spence said. "But when we don't have that common enemy, we turn on each other. I hope at the end of the day, we can come together as a country to serve our veterans."

Veterans across the world are not getting the services they should be, but the United States is considered one of the worst offenders, with mental health crises and homelessness among the significant problems impacting veterans.

After lunch, Bruce Jagroop invited attendees to reflect on their experiences on Sept. 11, 2001, and several stood up to share with the room.

One survived the collapsing towers but lost a friend. She had not spoken of her experience until that day and still cannot travel beyond Brooklyn Bridge. Another talked about the hours and days that followed the attacks, recalling the chilling silence where there once was music and friends coming together at each other's homes.

"For days, the only sound you heard was the fighter planes flying over," she said. "There were no cars driving, no music, no people talking. We sat outside in our backyards or on our stoops just waiting for our friends to call."

To this day, she can't stand silence.

The PEF Veterans' Committee reports to the president and is charged with reviewing issues concerning veterans and making recommendations to the president. The members of the committee are Christopher Buman – Chair, Region 3; Catherine Adams – Region 11; Troy Decker – Region 5; Robert Harms – Retiree; Bruce Jagroop – Region 1, Michael Singleton – Retiree; and PEF Contract Administration Director Ben Traslaviña.



Convention workshops cover workplace assaults, lesser-known contract benefits

By KATE STICKLES

PEF Convention delegates had the option of two workshops to attend after the main plenary session on Oct. 20.

Not Part of the Job: What to Do After a Workplace Assault, was led by staff from the PEF Health and Safety department. Assaults and other unsafe working conditions have increased over the years across state agencies and throughout state-run facilities.

The workshop provided members with a thorough, step-by-step guide on what to do when a member is assaulted, which starts with seeking medical care, reporting the assault to the union, and reserving the right to pursue criminal charges. The workshop also stressed, however, that telling the union is not enough. Incident reports, workplace violence incident reports, and a report to the NYS Accident Reporting System are all essential to ensuring proper documenting, accountability and safety.

The workshop did not stop at what to do for personal safety but also looked at how union leaders can make changes at the workplace to prevent further incidents.

PEF Health and Safety advised that leaders should ensure that they provide calm guidance and no pressure on decisions, but also protect the record by requesting video preservation, taking photos of injuries, and saving any relevant texts or emails.

Using Your Contract: Overlooked Benefits in the NYS-PEF Agreement provided members with a detailed look at several contract benefits available to members -- from the Productivity Enhancement Program (PEP) to Educational Reimbursements and Professional Development and even Parking Benefits.

Staff with PEF Contract Administration reminded members they can be reimbursed for up to \$5,000 per year in college tuition for qualifying courses taken at accredited colleges or universities, as well as reimbursements for certification and licensure examinations. Additionally, PEF members are eligible for workshop and seminar reimbursements for qualifying professional development conferences, workshops, seminars and non-college credit courses. Nurses can receive an additional \$1,600 per calendar year.

Flex Spending Accounts (FSA) are often overlooked by members as well. They are funded via paycheck deduction using pre-tax dollars and allow members to pay for certain expenses, including up to \$7,500 per household for childcare or elder care through the Dependent Care Advantage Account (DCAA). Other accounts include the Adoption Advantage Account (AAA), which allocates up to \$17,670 for adoption related expenses, and the Health Care Spending Account (HCSA) which sets aside any amount from \$100 to \$3,400 to pay for any health care expenses not reimbursed by health insurance.

Enrollment for the various FSA programs begins on November 2 and runs through December 7. The programs are administered by the NYS Office of Employee Relations. Sign up forms will be available on the [OER website](#). PEF will publicize the open enrollment period on its own website, social media channels, and the app.

Members interested in more information regarding either workshop topic may reach out to PEF Health & Safety at Healthand.Safety@pef.org or PEF Contract Administrator Dylan.Hatch@pef.org.



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PEF's 48th
Annual Convention



Region 1 Coordinator Vinny Cicatello presented a check to Executive Director Lisa Booz from the Ronald McDonald House of Western New York on the last day of Convention. Convention attendees blew right past the Region's goal and raised nearly \$9,000 for the organization.

Delegates surpass fundraising goal for Ronald McDonald House

Ahead of Convention, Region 1 set a goal of raising \$7,500 for the Ronald McDonald House of Western New York (RMH) charity and Convention attendees blew right past that and raised nearly \$9,000 for the organization.

Region 1 Coordinator Vinny Cicatello presented a check to Executive Director Lisa Booz on the last day of Convention.

"The Region 1 Convention Committee and the Roswell Park members who suggested the RMC are thankful that delegates were so generous in donating," said Cicatello. "We raised \$9,000 for a tremendous cause. The representative for RMH was in disbelief, she wasn't expecting that much."

Recognizing the need to support the whole family when a child is seriously ill or injured, the first Ronald McDonald House opened in Philadelphia in 1974.



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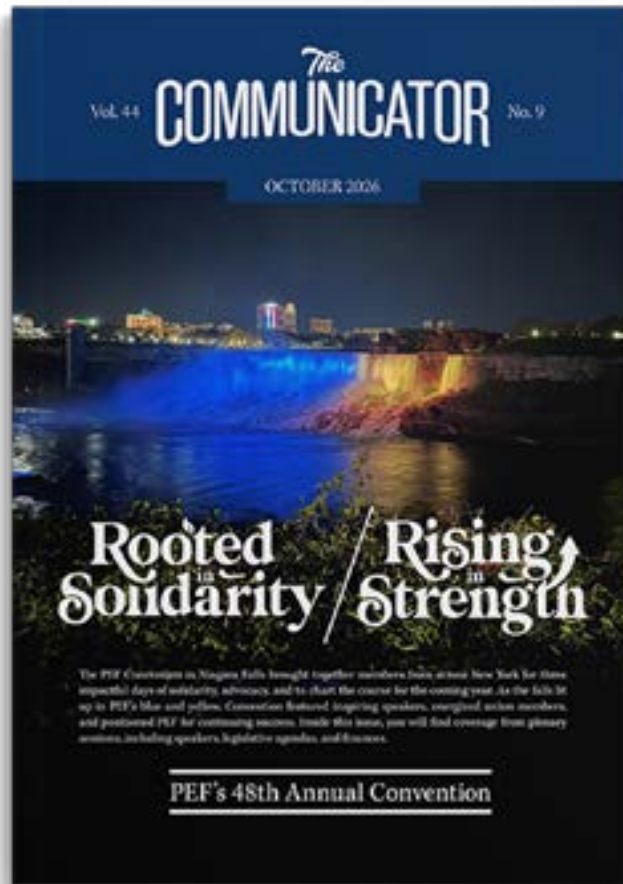
"What an impact this is going to make," Booz told delegates. "It costs \$153 per room per night. That adds up to millions every year. You are helping make a huge impact on our families; thank you very much."

Anyone may donate to the Ronald McDonald House charities [online](#). There is an option to select a specific program or chapter.

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PEF/DOCCS Labor-Management Conference focuses on new solutions to old problems

By **NAJEE WALKER**

More than 100 PEF members and members of management at the Department of Corrections and Community Supervision (DOCCS), including Commissioner Daniel Martuscello III, met in Albany Sept. 23-25, 2026, for a 3-day conference to discuss the issues facing members who work both behind the walls of correctional facilities across the state and outside the walls with formerly incarcerated individuals. This conference has been a tradition for many years, with DOCCS being the only agency willing to hold a joint conference with PEF. This year, PEF members who work for the Office of Mental Health (OMH) in Corrections-Based Operations and managers from OMH attended for the first time.

PEF President Wayne Spence welcomed attendees alongside PEF's DOCCS Labor-Management Chair Lori Greenizen and PEF Statewide Director of Field Services Katie Vorwald.

President Spence said that meetings like these are important, not only because they continue to move conversations from Labor-Management into action, but also because having earnest conversations about mental health, physical health, and all the issues faced by PEF members who work at DOCCS help them heal and find solutions.

"I want to tell you that because of the things I've been hearing and reading, I have been concerned about your well-being — physical and mental," President Spence said. "So we have been engaging more with commissioners, with management, with groups like One Voice United (OVU) and with the Correctional Association of New York (CANY)."

Partnerships like the ones with OVU and CANY, said President Spence, that are helping members discover ways of dealing with the stress of working for DOCCS, develop new solutions to issues at workplaces, and even craft and support legislation to change things at the agency.

The conference included a panel discussion with President Spence, Parole Officer and Council Leader for PEF Division 236 Gina Lopez, Founder of OVU Andy Potter, and OVU Senior Advisor Simon Greer, as well as the President of the New York State Correctional Officers & Police Benevolent Association Chris Summers. During the panel, Lopez said that many parole officers have felt sidelined following the former Department of Parole's merger with DOCCS in 2011.

"It is important to understand that we are part of the same system and deal with almost the same issues," said Lopez. "While you are working with incarcerated individuals inside the



facilities, we are working on making sure they don't end up back inside. And a lot of that can be tough for us."

Lopez pointed out that through OVU, PEF parole officers have been able to seek avenues to address their mental wellbeing and access wellness training through a partnership with [Desert Waters Correctional Outreach](#).

Each panelist agreed that while they take steps to try to combat issues around mental health and take as much care for their physical health as possible, some stress is hard to shake and they have erected "walls" that seem normal to them, but have alienated family and friends.

"My family has said to me that they've missed out on doing things that normal people do," said President Spence. "It has taken me years to get comfortable with choosing a seat at a restaurant that doesn't have my back facing a door."

The panelists all agreed, however, that despite the issues they face separately, they have accomplished more working together.

"You're never alone, and you're all family now," said NYSCOPBA President Summers, whose union represents corrections officers. "I hope that what I say to my members resonates with you all. Which is that when you're feeling alone, upset or need to talk, you can reach out to me."

PEF staff held discussions centered around how to use the contract to enforce grievances on out-of-title work and what

tools are available to members to help protect themselves from chemical exposures and other hazards on the job.

Exposure to hazardous or unknown chemicals are common inside facilities, and in some cases outside facilities with parole officers. However, PEF Health and Safety Director Josh Kemp said that PEF members should not accept that as normal.

"These things are not part of the job, they're not normal," said Kemp. "But there's also not enough people reporting it when it happens. We're pretending that this is normal and it's not. It's harmful."

President Spence said that about 2 percent of staff who work in facilities are likely to report strange smells, potentially harmful hazes, and even fires.

"You may not be sick now, but we know that sometimes long periods of exposure show negative effects later," said Kemp. "Not reporting puts so many people at risk."

In addition to filing Public Employee Safety and Health (PESH) complaints, which can often trigger inspections, investigations, violation citations and potentially fix whatever issues are reported, PEF members are encouraged to fill out a [Protest of Assignment \(POA\) form](#), which gives the member the right to work elsewhere in a facility away from the hazard.

"You cannot strike under the Taylor Law," said Kemp. "But what you can do is tell your supervisor or manager that there is a hazard and you need to be moved somewhere else to work until the hazard is clear."

POAs are protected under PESH. PEF nurses and other healthcare professionals widely use them, and the data collected is a big help when it comes to documentation of what is happening, where, and how often.

This advice was especially important for OMH members who work in Corrections Based-Operations, or CBOs. These members are often tasked with providing mental health services to members. Kemp said it is implausible to think that members can do the work of ensuring that incarcerated individuals are safe while both staff and those they serve are inhaling fumes or other potentially harmful substances.

On the second day of the conference, PEF invited DOCCS administration to an open forum with PEF leaders who sit at the Labor-Management table. This was a chance for members to hear directly from Commissioner Martuscello. Ahead of the question-and-answer session, the commissioner took a moment to show videos of retrofitted classrooms within facilities that now have protective barriers around teachers while they engage with incarcerated individuals, as well as doors that open for quick access to the on-duty correction officer or National Guard member in case of a dangerous situation where a teacher needs to leave the area.

"I want to thank you all for the incredible work and the hard work that you do," said Martuscello. "I want you to know that I've been listening to your members and others who have been in discussion with me ever since the assault at Lakeview."

Some members questioned the barriers themselves, as well as the policies in place that move incarcerated individuals. Under the Humane Alternatives to Long-Time Solitary Confinement (HALT) Act, when an incarcerated individual needs to be removed from general population due to behavior issues, they are moved to other units like the Residential Rehabilitation Unit (RRU). Many, including Commissioner Martuscello, said they believe individuals are misbehaving in order to be moved to the RRU, or other units.

Members also asked questions regarding retaliation at DOCCS, protections and prosecutorial steps taken against individuals who assault staff, requiring basic training for nurses who work at DOCCS, and more.

Members wanted answers for why it appeared correction officers were given pay increases following the wildcat strike in February 2025. The commissioner said that many were fired and that the reallocation was in the works 18 months prior to the strike.

"That request was sent to Class and Compensation and the Department of Civil Service rendered a decision three months after the strike," said Commissioner Martuscello.

For PEF Senior Parole Officers, pay was also on their mind—specifically Hazard Duty Pay, which Senior Parole Officers do not receive. Senior Parole Officers have been advocating to either receive hazard pay like parole officers or be removed from potentially dangerous situations that they believe require them to be paid the extra money. For Commissioner Martuscello, that means proving they are working half their job or more in hazardous situations. The officers believe they can prove that. The commissioner disagrees.

"I have not seen any evidence that shows that senior parole is doing the work at that 50 percent rate," said Commissioner Martuscello. "And I am not convinced that they are or that they will have that evidence."

PEF members in attendance said that they did not feel confident in the answers provided to them by Martuscello, and while they are grateful for his attendance, they hoped for more assistance and guidance.

"I don't feel that I have the confidence going forward to do my job, although that discussion was great and needed to be had," said Donna Gieycki, a vocational instructor at Orleans Correctional Facility.

At the end of the conference, once members had a chance to debrief and share final thoughts, President Spence made sure that the members did not go home without a word of confidence and gratefulness.

"To every member of DOCCS, Parole and to my OMH brothers and sisters, we say thank you," said President Spence. "You do work that most of your friends and your neighbors and the public do not know about. It needs to be said loudly and as often as possible: Thank you for the work that you do."





Department of
Environmental
Conservation

PEF member highlights Adirondack Park history on DEC podcast

By KATE STICKLES

The Adirondack Park is well known and beloved across the United States and the world. It is the largest publicly protected area in the contiguous United States.

Earlier this year, the “DEC Does What?!” podcast featured PEF Executive Board member Kaleb Winters, a land surveyor, discussing the story of Verplanck Colvin, superintendent of the New York State Adirondack Survey, and his push to create the park.

Verplanck Colvin (1847-1920) was a surveyor who began exploring the Adirondack wilderness in 1866. In 1870, he saw the extensive damage being done by lumbermen in the Adirondacks, wrote a report about what he saw, and read it at the Albany Institute.

The report caught the attention of New York State officials and was printed in the NYS Museum of Natural History’s annual report. In it, he tied clear-cutting of Adirondack forests to reduced water flow in the state’s canals and rivers. In 1872, Colvin applied to the NYS Legislature for a stipend to cover the costs of a survey of the Adirondacks, was successful, and was subsequently named the Superintendent of the Adirondack Survey. By 1900, Colvin had completed the most thorough survey of the Adirondacks ever accomplished.

“Since 2005, I have been following the work of Verplanck Colvin,” Winters said. “I have also participated in official recreations and recoveries of Colvin’s work with the Colvin Crew, a nonprofit organization that perpetuates his legacy.”

A Colvin Crew member since 2015, Winters helped plan the International Surveyors Historical Society Rendezvous in Lake George in 2016. The program, “The Verplanck Colvin Story, Adirondack Wilderness Surveyor and Savior,” highlighted Colvin’s role in preserving the park and open spaces. [Learn more about Verplanck Colvin from this 1954 article in The Conservationist magazine.](#)



PEF member Kaleb Winters out on a land surveying job.

A chance meeting with a NYSDEC land surveying crew on his way home from high school stuck with Winters and led him to a rewarding career. Though he considered studying to become a studio musician, he chose Paul Smith’s College in the Adirondacks for its surveying program.

“I really fell in love with land surveying there,” he said. “Now, my day-to-day job consists of historic land title research and assisting the state Attorney General’s Office in approving titles so DEC can acquire more land for public recreation throughout New York State. I also support our 16 licensed state land surveyors and 10 assistant surveyors across nine regions.”

Through his state job, Winters began managing and researching DEC’s original Verplanck Colvin records in 2020. In 2023, he was asked to present on Colvin at the spring 2024 NYS Archives Partnership Trust steward program, promoting New York Archives Magazine and NYS Conservationist Magazine.



PEF member Kaleb Winters in the NYS Archives, where he works with historic land title research and the records of Verplanck Colvin.

"After that, DEC asked me to do an episode of the 'DEC Does What?!' podcast," he said. "On the podcast, I talk about how DEC's Bureau of Real Property carries on Colvin's work statewide through land acquisition and conservation easements that protect forest land."

A union land surveyor in public service for more than 16 years, Winters has more than 24 years of experience. He has been a PEF member for 10 years: four with the Office of General Services and six with DEC in Divisions 179 and 169 respectively.

Newly elected to the Executive Board, Winters is a passionate labor advocate.

"I have been organizing for social justice, labor, the environment, and independent working-class politics in earnest since 2009," he said. "Through doing this work, I believe that labor unions are one of the most democratic institutions workers will experience in their lives. Organizing working people is necessary to achieve control over the pace and methods of our work and our lives."

Recognizing the struggles of his peers, he ran for steward at the start of the pandemic and continues to take on leadership roles in PEF.

"I have taken on leadership roles within Division 169, serving as statewide Labor Management Chair, Assistant Council Leader, and Central Office Chief Shop Steward," he said. "I enjoy helping my union colleagues with their issues and seeing them get wins and make changes that improve their lives."

Winters also serves as a PEF delegate at Convention and the Vice President of the Troy Area Labor Council that was established in 1881 and has more than 40 affiliated local unions representing more than 15,000 workers throughout Rensselaer County.

Editor's Note: To listen to the "DEC Does What?!" podcast, search for it by name and subscribe in your preferred podcast app. [Here](#) is a direct link to the episode featuring Kaleb Winters on Spotify.

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A busy year for the PEF Hispanic Committee – with more to come

By **VIVIAN FALTO** – **Statewide Hispanic Committee Chair**

National Hispanic Heritage Month celebrates the contributions of Americans tracing their roots to Spain, Mexico, Central America, South America and the Spanish-speaking nations of the Caribbean.

In 1968, Congress set aside a week for this observance, and two decades later expanded it to a month stretching from September 15 to October 15. This year, the theme is “Unidos, Somos Más” (Together, We Are More).

The PEF Hispanic Committee has been active and engaged all year, attending and sponsoring events from New York City to Albany.

In April, the Committee sponsored a [luncheon and set up a booth](#) at the 40th anniversary of the **Somos New York Conference in Albany**. Somos, Inc. is a leading force in uniting, advocating for, and uplifting Latino communities in New York State.



Martin Larrosa at the podium reading the proclamation aloud to attendees.



Mariana Gil with Civil Service Commissioner Timothy Hogues at the Hispanic Heritage Month celebration on September 26.

In August, there was a collaborative **Workers’ Compensation training session**, hybrid and in person at the PEF New York City office, hosted by the Hispanic Committee alongside experts from Aronova & Associates to help union members understand workers’ compensation processes, benefits, and resource navigation.

The Hispanic Committee also participated in the annual **Labor Mass and Banner Procession** at St. Francis of Assisi, in Manhattan. This year, in commemoration of the 25th anniversary of September 11, attendees honored the workers who ran toward danger, helped the city recover and rebuild, and paid an enormous price in the years that followed. I did the Mass Reading in Spanish and other labor leaders, including NYS AFL-CIO President Mario Cilento, spoke.

The Hispanic Committee also participated in a [Day of Service](#), during the 2026 AFT Convention in July in Washington, D.C. The day involved a trip to the historic Shiloh Baptist Church where

delegates distributed 5,000 books and 500 backpacks to students, as well as essential food and hygiene items for people facing affordability challenges or experiencing homelessness. The effort supported eight public schools and numerous after-school programs, ensuring local families have the resources they need.

I was elected as one of the Executive Board members for the **AFT Latino Caucus** National Chapter, during elections conducted at Convention, and was also elected as the **AFT Latino Caucus NYS Chapter** Vice President, securing PEF representation at the State and National level.

PEF also strengthened its relationship with **LCLAA National**, leading to a collaboration that will come to fruition at the PEF Convention and be open to all delegates.

If you want to get involved, please reach out to me directly at Vivian.Falto@pef.org.



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PEF Division 357 (ITS) members and their families pose for a photo before the 42-story climb.

ITS team climbs 42 floors for Tunnel to Towers charity

By KATE STICKLES

PEF Division 357 (ITS) members, family and friends, climbed 819 steps - 42 floors - to the Observation Deck of Corning Tower in downtown Albany on September 19, as part of the Capital Region Tunnel to Towers Climb.

Every single one made it to the top.

"The Tunnel to Towers Foundation was created in honor of FDNY firefighter Stephen Siller, who lost his life on Sept. 11, 2001," said team leader Christopher Bolduc. "Today, the foundation supports first responders, military members, veterans, and their families."

The foundation provides, among other things, mortgage-free homes to Gold Star and fallen first responder families, builds specially adapted smart homes for catastrophically injured veterans and first responders, and works to address veteran homelessness.

Bolduc said this is the first time ITS has created a team for the climb.

"I intended to register as an individual," he said. "I noticed there was an option to participate as part of a group, including a workplace group, so I searched for NYS and then for ITS and didn't find one."

The idea took off and at a Division 357 Stewards meeting, Bolduc made a motion asking the Division to sponsor and support Team ITS.



"The motion passed unanimously, and PEF really got behind us," Bolduc said. "The Division provided ITS/PEF shirts for every member of our group. What started as me just planning to sign up on my own turned into something we were able to do together as ITS employees, friends, and family, with support from PEF."

Climbers ranged in age from 5 to 75 years old.

"What really stayed with me was seeing everyone on our team make it to the top," Bolduc said. "We had people of very different ages and fitness levels, and everyone took on the same 809 steps. Seeing every single member of our group reach the top was pretty special."

ITS member Sanju Sharma participated in the climb after witnessing the horrors of Sept. 11, on the news in high school.

"I participated in this meaningful cause to honor all the brave service members, firefighters and first responders who have selflessly dedicated their lives to serving and protecting others," Sharma said. "As a high school student, I witnessed the 9/11 tragedy unfold on the news, but at that time I could not fully comprehend the magnitude of their sacrifice. Years later, when my brother joined the U.S. Army and completed his active duty with the Army National Guard-New York in June, I gained a deeper appreciation for the courage, commitment and dedication."

"We may never fully repay those who have sacrificed, but we can honor their service, remember their courage, and carry their legacy forward," Sharma continued. "With profound gratitude and respect, I honor all those who served, all those who continue to serve and all those who made the ultimate sacrifice. They will never be forgotten."

Fellow participant Uma Kadaramandalgi also joined to honor the fallen.

"I participated in the Tunnel to Towers Challenge because I enjoy taking part in physical challenges," Uma Kadaramandalgi said. "When I learned that the event supports firefighters who sacrificed their lives during the 9/11 attacks, I felt compelled to join. It was a meaningful way to honor their courage and remember their sacrifice."

Bolduc is proud of ITS and PEF's support.

"Division 357 gave us tremendous support from the beginning, and it turned out what could have been a handful of individuals participating separately into something that really felt like a team effort," Bolduc said. "We'd like this to become an annual ITS tradition."

Council Leader Christopher Ford said participating in the climb highlighted the solidarity of his coworkers, who are integrated with PEF members from almost every executive agency.

"ITS did not exist at the time of 9/11 but our precursor agency OFT and other agencies experienced losses and many of us still remember the exact moment we heard the news - from where we were to what we were thinking," he said. "While all of our experiences vary, they bring us together for a shared sense of community. When Christopher Bolduc requested that the Division support a team for Tunnel to Towers, the response from our Council was how do we get it done. We wondered why we had not already done this. I am incredibly proud of our Division response and of the team, all of whom made it to the top of the Corning Tower!

"Tunnel to Towers honors the life and sacrifice of FDNY firefighter Stephen Siller and all those who lost their lives on September 11, 2001," he added. "The spirit I saw on the day of the events honors us all and gives hope for our future."

Team ITS climbers were Ion Timotin, Das Balakrishnan, Team Captain Christopher Bolduc, Matthew Brockbank, Oleg Gavrilov, Richard Hichman, Raymond Hickok. Uma Kadaramandalgi, Sanju Sharma, Reissa Sookraj, Marcy Stevens, Todd Stevens, Gaurav Upadhyay, and Supriya Walvekar.

In addition to climbing, the ITS team raised \$1,330 (the fourth highest) for the foundation. Other volunteers and donors were Ticia McGean, Heather Craven, Christopher J. Ford, Rita Jordan, Robert Jordan, and PEF Region 5.



Time off to vote on Election Day is a legal right

By NAJEE WALKER

With election day fast approaching, many have been looking at early voting to ensure that they can do their job and be heard at the ballot box this year. Early voting runs from October 24 through November 1 in New York, and the State has designated Election Day as a “floating holiday” instead of a paid day off. However, even with much of the State still running on Election Day, there is an option for those who need time to vote.

Under Election §Law 3-110, registered voters who may not have sufficient time outside of their scheduled working hours may use up to two hours to vote without loss of pay on Election Day, Nov. 3.

Members who need this time must notify their employer between 2-10 working days before Election Day. In this case, that means members must notify their employer sometime between October 20 – October 30.

Additionally, “sufficient time” under the law is described as four consecutive hours between either the opening of polls and beginning of a shift, or between the end of a shift and closing of polls. Because New York polls are open from 6am to 9pm on Election Day, this means that members are only eligible for this benefit if they work a shift that starts before 10am and ends after 5pm.

“I am asking each PEF member to please make a plan to vote,” said PEF President Wayne Spence. “We work to make sure you are represented by a union. This is the time to make sure you are represented properly in New York as well. Use your voice at the ballot box.”



PEF encourages members to get involved and vote

By **NAJEE WALKER**

Since the primary election season in June, PEF members have taken steps to ensure that their fellow union members are well-informed as the midterm general elections approach.

At the last PEF Executive Board meeting in September, members endorsed candidates for races across the state, including for New York State Assembly, New York State Senate, Governor, Attorney General and Comptroller. Candidates went through a lengthy process of questionnaires and interviews, with each PEF Regional Political Action Committee making recommendations to the Statewide Political Action Committee (SWPAC), which were ultimately presented to the Executive Board for consideration.

“These are endorsements that make sense to the union’s policies and are meant to strengthen relationships for the union as a whole and strengthen our rights,” said Vice President Randi DiAntonio, who chairs the SWPAC. “These are not based on personal politics.”

“PEF remains focused on alleviating the affordability crisis facing members,” said Legislative Director Pat Lyons. “That is why PEF fought for a good contract and secured Tier 6 reform focused on reducing employee contributions to the pension plan for Tier 6 members. But, we know we have much more to do more.”

PEF’s endorsement process included discussions on candidates’ positions on policies to help slow inflation and other cost increases affecting PEF members and other working families.

The PEF Executive Board also voted to endorse fellow member Devin Lander. Lander is a Historian and PEF Steward at the State Education Department.

PEF is now making sure that members know exactly what they’re voting for. As more federal budget cuts to non-defense spending come down from Washington, PEF anticipates federal Medicaid spending to drop by \$8-\$10 billion the next state fiscal year with additional federal cuts coming to the supplemental nutrition assistance program (SNAP) and for public schools. New York will need to find a way to meet these new unanticipated costs in its fiscal plan if it does not get a proper share of federal support. PEF is supporting candidates that will say no to the President’s proposed budget to make further cuts to Medicaid, education, housing, climate and environment initiatives, grant programs to states, and eliminating programs like FEMA and the Community Development Financial Institutions Fund, which would harm our rural communities.

“PEF has and will continue to support legislation that reduces costs, enhances benefits and keeps members safe on the job,” said Vice President DiAntonio. “We need to elect candidates to office who understand the difficulties faced by public employees – from short staffing to workplace violence to affordability – make that goal significantly easier.”

Early voting in New York begins on October 24 and runs through November 1. Election Day is November 3, 2026, with polls statewide open from 6 a.m. until 9 p.m. Check the [New York State Board of Elections website](#) to find your polling place.

Members can find the list of union-endorsed candidates and [PEF’s website](#) under the PEF Endorsements tab.



COLLEGE AID PROGRAMS

Applications open for several college aid programs

The cost of earning a college degree in the U.S. remains a significant financial challenge for many families and the average price increased in the 2026-2027 academic year over the prior year across both public and private colleges.

For the 2026 academic year, full-time undergraduate tuition at CUNY schools is \$6,930 per year for four-year colleges and at SUNY schools is \$7,070 per year for undergraduate state-operated campuses. There are programs to make those schools even more affordable.

FAFSA, TAP applications

The [2027-28 Free Application for Federal Student Aid \(FAFSA\)](#) and the [NYS Tuition Assistance Program \(TAP\)](#) applications are now open. Applying early means you'll know your aid eligibility sooner, have time to fix any errors, and give prospective colleges information to build your financial aid package.

Steps to Apply:

- Create your StudentAid.gov account.
- Complete your FAFSA.
- Use the state link at the end to complete your TAP application.

Need help completing your FAFSA or TAP? Attend a virtual FAFSA/TAP [completion event](#).

Science, technology, engineering and math

The 2027-28 NYS STEM Incentive Program application is now open for NYS students who plan to attend a SUNY or CUNY college.

To be eligible, students must:

- Rank in the top 10 percent of their high school graduating class at a NYS high school. (HESC does not round class rank, a rank of 10.4% is not eligible).
- Apply in your high school senior year.
- Enroll in an [undergraduate program](#) in Science, Technology, Engineering, or Mathematics full-time.
- Commit to living and working in a [STEM occupation](#) in New York State for five years.

The application deadline for the 2027-2028 academic year is Aug. 15, 2027. To learn more and to apply, visit hesc.ny.gov/STEM.

Students who don't meet citizenship or residency requirements may still qualify for New York State financial aid through alternate pathways, like the Senator José Peralta NYS DREAM Act or the Alternate Eligibility Path. Visit the [Applying for Aid](#) webpage to learn more.



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Investing in Women, Building Union Leaders: Cynthia Walker's Summer School Experience

By **NAJEE WALKER**

The PEF Statewide Women's Committee is proud to feature one of our very own committee members, Cynthia Walker, RN and highlight her experience attending the United Association for Labor Education (UALE) Northeast Summer School for Union Women. Her participation this summer represents another goal accomplished by our committee: providing a scholarship that creates opportunities for our members to learn, grow, develop their leadership skills, and bring that knowledge and experience back to strengthen our union.

Sometimes leadership begins with an invitation. For Cynthia, an RN at SUNY Downstate Medical Center in Brooklyn, that invitation came many years ago when a fellow nurse encouraged her to attend her first PEF Convention.

"I didn't know anything about Convention," Walker recalled. But her colleague suggested that attending would give her the opportunity to know the union better. "She gave me the forms to sign...I got the members' signatures, you know she guided me through the whole process." Walker laughed as she recalled: "I went to Convention and a time was had. A time was had!"

She met members from across the state, experienced the camaraderie of the union and found people who were welcoming and inclusive. Most importantly, she began to see PEF as more than an organization to which she belonged. It was a place where she could participate, learn, and eventually lead.

Leadership development remains one of the priorities of the PEF Statewide Women's Committee. We believe that when we provide women with opportunities to develop their skills, build confidence, make connections and discover their own leadership potential, that investment comes back to our union. That is why the committee was proud to provide Cynthia with a scholarship to attend the 49th UALE Northeast Summer School for women in unions and worker organizations, held this past July.

Cynthia was prepared to make the personal investment necessary to attend the Summer School on her own.

She wasn't asking what would be paid for or whether she would be reimbursed. She was simply interested in the experience and that caught our attention. The scholarship was about more than helping with the cost of attending a program. It was about saying to one of our members: We see your interest. We see your potential. And we want to invest in your growth.

For Cynthia, receiving that support "meant the world."

"I had never been to a labor school before," she said. "I didn't have a clue what I was signing up for."

She went anyway. And she came home changed. She trusted that the opportunity to learn would be worthwhile. Cynthia recalls her first impression was the energy of the women and the environment. This year's Summer School was held at the CUNY School of Labor and Urban Studies in New York City, with the theme "Resist · Rebuild · Renew: Sowing Seeds of Solidarity."

Cynthia was surrounded by a variety of women from occupations and unions she had never imagined meeting in the same classroom.

"These were powerful women," Cynthia said. "I never saw anything like this in my life."

She was particularly struck by the women working in fields traditionally dominated by men. There were bus operators and train conductors. Women working in theater, costumes, audiovisual production, filmmaking, television, advertising and marketing. There were women just beginning their union involvement and women who were experienced union activists. A variety of women of different ages, from different backgrounds, but all were workers and they all had stories.

"I couldn't believe it. They were as strong, as strong could be." For Cynthia, the Summer School quickly became about much more than attending classes, it became about sisterhood.

When asked if there was a workshop, conversation, or moment that left an impression on her, Cynthia shared an experience she had in a health and safety workshop. As a nurse and safe-staffing advocate, Cynthia is very familiar with workplace health and safety from the healthcare perspective; however, when she listened to the female transit workers talk about the lack of access to clean, safe and appropriate restroom facilities for the women operating the buses and trains, she was appalled.

"We never get on the train and think that the conductor has to go to the bathroom," Cynthia observed. "We get on a train and think, when is our next destination?"

Cynthia discussed learning from another woman in the workshop who described her work with costumes for Broadway productions. Cynthia learned about older costumes, about chemicals used in connection with fire protection and cramped backstage spaces where workers and performers sometimes must change.

"You go to a Broadway show, you sit up, you enjoy," Cynthia said. "But you never think of the hazards that are going on behind the scenes."

Those conversations stayed with her because they expanded her understanding of occupational health and safety.

The Summer School created a space where women could talk openly about those experiences, learn from one another and, most importantly, exchange information. That sense of connection changed the experience from education alone into something larger. Women were telling their truths, hearing the truths of other women and realizing they did not have to tackle workplace problems in isolation.

"You don't have to feel defeated," Cynthia said. "You don't have to feel like, 'I'm the only one.' You don't have to feel, 'Oh, I'm going to get in trouble,' because there are avenues of support." Connections were made, telephone numbers were shared and email addresses were exchanged. "It's networking," she explained. "It's not that we just come to class and forget about each other." Cynthia may not remember the names of every woman she met, but she remembers something that may be even more important: She knows how to find them.

The real measure of leadership education isn't simply what happens while we are sitting in a classroom. It's what happens after we leave. What do we bring back to our coworkers? Are we more willing to speak up? Do we ask different questions? Do we organize differently? Do we encourage another woman to get involved? Do we recognize possibilities in ourselves that perhaps we didn't recognize before? When asked what she planned to bring back from Summer School, Cynthia immediately corrected the question. "I already brought it back."

Since attending Summer School, Cynthia has moved forward with labor-management activity at SUNY Downstate, bringing her team together for a labor-management meeting after years of inconsistent meetings. She is also preparing to lead efforts to rebuild health and safety activities at her workplace, another area she says has not had an active committee in years. Cynthia directly connects some of that renewed energy to Summer School.

There was no hesitation when she was asked what she would tell another PEF member who sees an opportunity like Summer School but isn't sure whether to apply.

"Please come," she said. Then she reconsidered. "I would beg them — please come." Why? "It was a life-changing experience for me," Cynthia said. "And I know it would be for them."

The PEF Statewide Women's Committee hopes to offer another union sister the opportunity when the UALE Summer School celebrates its 50th anniversary at Penn State University in July 2027. The committee continues fundraising with the goal of helping another member experience the education, sisterhood and leadership development that Cynthia found so meaningful. But her story also carries another message: Invest in yourself. Sometimes we don't know exactly where an opportunity will lead. Sometimes we don't know anyone else in the room. Sometimes we don't even know exactly what we signed up for. Go anyway!

At the end of our conversation, I asked Cynthia to finish one sentence:

"I went to Summer School because _____, and I came home with _____."

Her answer captured nearly everything we had discussed. She went because a union sister recommended the experience. She trusted that recommendation, even though she had no idea what the experience would bring. What did she bring home?

"I left there with an experience that I will never, ever forget," she said. "It was a life-changing experience."

Perhaps that is the real story of Cynthia Walker and Summer School. She walked into Summer School not knowing exactly what to expect. She walked out wanting to do more.

We want Cynthia's story to encourage other women throughout PEF to consider taking that next step. Maybe you have never considered yourself a "union leader." Maybe you have never attended a labor school. Maybe you have never spoken at a union meeting, gone to a microphone at convention, attended a lobby day, facilitated a workshop or served on a committee. That doesn't mean you can't start. Sometimes leadership begins with curiosity. Sometimes it begins when someone recognizes potential in you. And sometimes it begins when you see an opportunity and simply decide you want to be there. Cynthia Walker made that decision. The PEF Statewide Women's Committee was proud to help her get there. And now we want to know: Who's next?



RETIREES IN ACTION: Get informed, get to the polls, make a difference

By JIM CARR - President, PEF Statewide Retirees

Everyone deserves dignity, a life they can afford, and real opportunity. That's why we organize and fight for a secure retirement for all workers, for safe working conditions, a fair wage, affordable quality insurance, and a secure pension.

America belongs to all of us — the people who care, who show up, and the ones who fight for dignity, a life we can afford, and real opportunity — not the wealthy few.

We are Union Strong, engaged, and fired up for the next election!

We are educators, healthcare workers, and public service professionals. We show up every day to support our kids, our families, and our communities. **We will not back down against chaos, corruption, and cruelty. We will build community, not division. We demand opportunity, not hardship.**

On Election Day, **we are coming together to vote for the values that unite us:** safe and welcoming schools, affordable healthcare, strong communities, and a voice for every person.

Americans deserve safe, welcoming schools; affordable healthcare and higher education; the right to form and join unions; fair pay and safe working conditions; a secure retirement; and a strong democracy where every person is valued and every vote counts.

That's why communities across the nation must rise up to protect our freedoms and our future. We must make clear that in America, we don't have kings, and we won't back down against chaos, corruption and cruelty.

But as we fight for working people, President Trump escalates his authoritarian power grab. He thinks his rule is absolute. He is sending masked agents into our streets, terrorizing our communities. They are targeting immigrant families, profiling, arresting and detaining people without warrants. Threatening to overtake elections. Gutting healthcare, environmental protections, and education when families need them most. Rigging maps to silence voters. Ignoring mass shootings at our schools and in our communities. Driving up the cost of living while handing out massive giveaways to billionaire allies, as families struggle. Starting a war of choice and coming out worse than before!

We need competent leadership — we need fairness, opportunity, and respect for all.

We need to turn out this November and elect candidates who support unions and working-class values! Our union does a great job of vetting candidates from both parties, then endorsing the best candidate who supports unions, workers and retirees.

The biggest mistake we can make is not to be involved. Our unique republic (this year we celebrate 250 years of our blessings as a country) only thrives if we stay engaged. Positions and perspectives chosen by individuals are what is protected by our constitution but cannot exist without our support and engagement.

So, show up if you can, express your views to your representatives, and always care enough to stay informed. We are entering a crucial time which will lay out the path to determine our future.

Be an informed voter. Your union has an excellent candidate vetting process where we send every candidate a questionnaire about the issues that impact our members. If the candidate seeks our endorsement, we interview at the regional level and the regions make their recommendations to the Statewide Political Action Committee (SW PAC) for consideration. The SW PAC votes on the recommendations and then the Executive Board has the final say.

PEF endorses candidates on both sides of the aisle. Incumbents are judged by their voting record on member issues. If an incumbent has a terrible voting record, we may endorse the opponent or recommend no endorsement.

Early voting starts in New York on October 24 so check your local [Board of Elections](#) for the time and place. Visit <https://www.pef.org/departments/political-action/> and scroll down to PEF Endorsements for candidates the Executive Board voted to support.

Together, we will stand up, speak up, show up, and vote — because when we fight, we win.

In Solidarity,

Jim Carr

**Statewide President
PEF RETIREES**



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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.

Justin Benton is a lab technologist at Roswell Park. To obtain a donation form, email Lindsay.Jaskowiak@roswellpark.org.

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

Tina M. Clark is an information technology specialist 2 at the Office of Information Technology Services in Niagara Falls. Email HR.LeaveManagement@its.ny.gov for a donation form.

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.

Christina Fernet is a director of financial services 1 at the Department of Financial Services. To donate, please fill out this form and email it to jacqueline.macpherson@dfs.ny.gov and LATS@dfs.ny.gov.

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.

JP Fried is a registered nurse 1 at SUNY Upstate in Syracuse. Email 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 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 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 to obtain a donation form.

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

Gretchen Hoffman is a registered nurse 2 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.

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

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.

Jennifer Silvanic-Lopes is a Labor Service Representative at the Department of Labor in Endicott. Email 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 or 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 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 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, or call 518-785-1900.



October 21, 2026

Delegates from the State Education Department pose with "S.T.O.M.P. - (Stop Treating Our Members Poorly) - the PEF inflatable that calls out management bullying around the State!

October 14, 2026

Region 2 Coordinator Shelby Wisneski and PEF members Carrie Hoopes (steward), Stacey Heary and Carina Watson from Allegany County spoke out during the county legislature's public comment period, sharing their perspectives on ongoing contract negotiations and advocating for a fair contract.



October 13, 2026

PEF President Wayne Spence joined New York State Attorney General Letitia James at a press conference in Castleton-on-Hudson, to express support for two PEF-endorsed candidates -- Devin Lander for NYS Senate, who is a PEF member, the New York State Historian, and a candidate in Senate District 43 (Rensselaer County, most of Washington County, and parts of Albany County) and Sarah for State Senate (Sarah Rogerson), a civil rights and immigration attorney, running for Senate District 44 (Parts of Saratoga and Schenectady Counties).





October 11, 2026

With just weeks until Election Day, PEF members were busy supporting one of their union brothers, making phone calls to urge support for Devin Lander for NYS Senate. A PEF member and the New York State Historian, Devin is running a campaign in SD-43 focused on affordability, healthcare and education for residents of Rensselaer, Washington and Albany Counties.



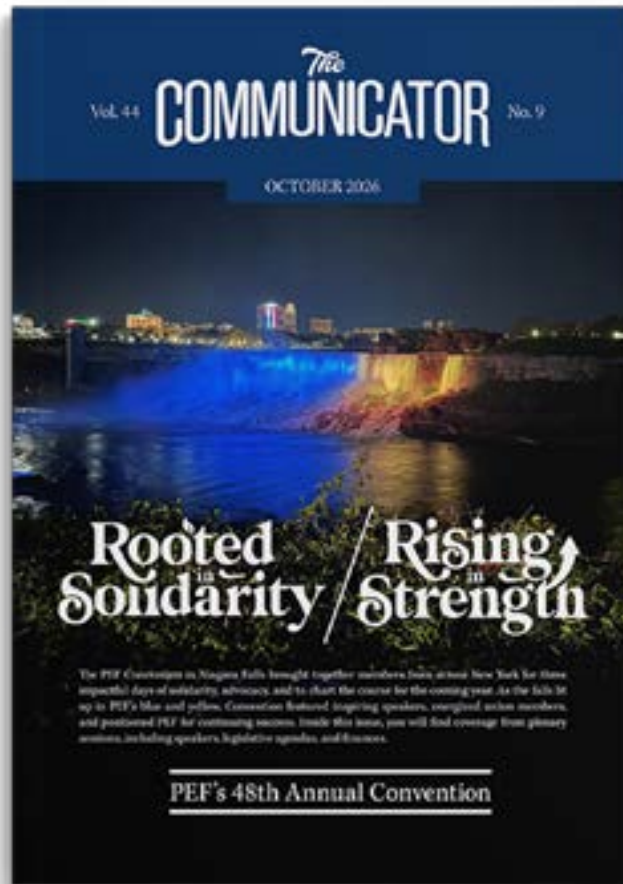
October 6, 2026

Standing together in support of Breast Cancer Awareness! Division 292 came together to raise awareness, show support, and honor those affected by breast cancer.

October 1, 2026

Executive Board member Nick McAndrew updated Division 295 members at the Department of State on the progress PEF is making to hold management accountable to our contract.





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