



# PEC Connection

Official Publication of the New York State Public Employee Conference, Inc.



## Chairman's Message

*I would like to welcome everyone to the Public Employees 29th Annual Breakfast. On behalf of the Co-Chairs, Board of Directors and Officers, I wish to express appreciation and gratitude to all the members of the Legislature and their leaders.*

*This is the start of my sixth year as Chairman of the New York State Public Employee Conference, a position I am proud and honored to hold. Our Conference has now grown to 53 unions. To the leaders of these unions, I say thank you for supporting our Conference and helping to make it stronger, and thank you for the terrific job you do representing the members of your unions.*

*To all the Legislators in attendance and to those who could not attend, I say thank you for always supporting public employees and being responsive to our issues, especially for your support with the 9/11 Presumptive Disability Bill.*

*This morning we have distributed our legislative agenda for the year 2006 and we are hopeful that the Legislature will consider the impact of all legislative proposals upon the public employees of New York State. We know that in any legislative session, some of our bills will be adopted and some will not. We are confident that in every case, the Legislators will review our arguments with careful attention and serious thought.*

*As the leaders of thousands of dedicated, hard-working men and women public employees, we know there are some difficult times before us. But we also know — as many of us have been here before — that it has always been the public employees under their excellent leadership that have led the way in helping the City and State through their crises. We must not let the service of our public employees to this great State be forgotten. Everyday our members give their all to make this State better. We saw the ultimate sacrifice many paid on September 11, 2001, and we continue to see public employees rise to the top throughout every crisis.*

*While today is a day to thank our Legislative Leaders*

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## Legislators Turn Out in Record Number for PEC Breakfast

Each year the number of labor unions joining the Public Employee Conference increases, and so too does the number of Legislators joining the Conference at the Annual Breakfast.

"This year's turnout of Senators, Assemblymembers, and staff representatives, was the largest on record. While the list of those who came to the February 7 event is too long to list in its entirety, there are more than a few worth mentioning," Chairman Peter Meringolo said.

Senate Majority Leader Joseph Bruno, Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver, Albany Mayor Gerald Jennings, Assemblymen Peter Abbate, and James Tedesco, Senators David Paterson and Martin Golden, Assemblywoman Susan John and more than 100 other Legislators were in attendance.

The aforementioned all addressed the crowd, and praised the work of public employees.

Senator Joseph Bruno said that "these are challenging times and I thank you for all that you do as leaders of so many people. You deliver the services so many people enjoy. I want to thank you for your leadership and for partnering with us."

Senator Martin Golden spoke about passing legislation that helps protect those who protect New Yorkers every-

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Senate Majority Leader Joseph Bruno



## Chairman's Message

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and Legislative Body for the work they have done, it is also a day to remind all of you that the work is not complete. Perhaps we know it can never be complete and we must look at it as a continuing work in progress. But we must never lose sight of the valuable service provided to our State day in and day out by dedicated and committed public employees.

We will continue to remind our Legislative leaders of the contribution of public employees and we are hopeful that together we can move forward in unity and help provide decent wages and health benefits for our members

As always, I and all the leaders of the New York State Public Employee Conference, stand ready to support our legislature and work with all of you in helping to pass legislation that will enhance the lives of public employees and their families. ♦



Chairman Peter Meringolo



Sue Balian, Assembly Labor Liaison, with Peter Meringolo



Assemblywoman Susan John with Peter Meringolo

## Conference Lays Out Legislative Agenda for 2006

### ON-GOING INITIATIVES

- ▶ Pension Systems Protection
- ▶ Early Retirement Without Reduction of Service
- ▶ Benefit Improvements for Survivors of Workers Killed in Line of Duty
- ▶ Ensure Safe Work Environment
- ▶ Progressive Methods of Taxation
- ▶ Improvement to the 9/11 Presumptive Disability Law

### ISSUES UNDER STUDY

- ▶ State Budget Implications
- ▶ Legislation Providing Criminal Sanctions Against Anyone Assaulting Public Employees During Their Performance of Duties
- ▶ Deferred Retirement Option Plans (DROP)
- ▶ Health Care Reforms
- ▶ Partial Lump Sum Option Plans (PLOP)

### ISSUES SUPPORTED

- ▶ Worker's Compensation Reform

- ▶ Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA)
- ▶ Pension Re-openers
- ▶ Ensuring Safe Nursing Staffing
- ▶ Military Buyback for Veterans
- ▶ Permanent Agency Shop
- ▶ Independent Hearing Officer
- ▶ Tier Equity
- ▶ Permanent Heart Bill
- ▶ Revision of Taylor Law
- ▶ Statewide Variable Supplements Fund
- ▶ Pensions Guarantee

### ISSUES OPPOSED

- ▶ Legislative Attempts to Undermine Collective Bargaining and the Existing Binding Arbitration Process
- ▶ Term Limits for Legislators
- ▶ Residency Requirement for Public Employees
- ▶ Inappropriate Consolidation of Services
- ▶ Privatization
- ▶ Diminishment of Health Insurance Benefits for Retirees

## Assembly Speaker Silver Calls Public Employees the “Backbone” of New York State

**N**YS Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver kicked off his annual address to public employees at the NYS Public Employee Conference Legislative Breakfast by saying that New York State would not be what it is today without the hard work and dedication of public employees.

“I believe that New York’s public employees are the backbone of this State. Elected leaders will come and elected leaders will go and this democracy will progress unabated,” Silver said. “But take away our law enforcement, corrections and court officers ... take away our firefighters, EMTs, health care workers, and sanitation officers ... take away the people who run our public transportation system and those who build and rebuild our public infrastructure, and this democracy that we hold so precious will sour — almost immediately — into chaos.”

He said that as an elected official, it is his obligation and duty, as well as the duty of this State as a whole, to prevent public employees from being harmed in the first place. That requires ensuring proper training, fair compensation and protecting them on and off the job.

“Action is what matters,” Silver said. “New York is the safest big state because New York’s law enforcement officers risk their lives every single day to make it the safest big state.

“Those of us who take our seats up here on the hill must make a concerted effort to understand how our actions will impact the men and women who daily carry out the laws and policies that we promulgate.”

The Assembly Speaker said that the best issue supporting his argument is the debate on banning armor-piercing bullets. He questioned how New York State can be caring enough to provide each and every law enforcement officer with a bullet-proof vest but be careless enough to permit the legal sale of “cop-killer” bullets.

For the sake of all law enforcement, Silver said he is calling for a joint conference committee on preventing gun violence.

“Let’s ban military-style assault weapons and high-powered sniper rifles. Let’s keep our unwitting children from getting their hands on their parents’ firearms. Let’s take the next step against gun crime before another cop has to face a Damien Henry armed with an Uzi assault rifle,” Silver said.

Silver also pointed to the 1997 death of Brooklyn sanitation officer Michael Hanly who died from inhaling toxic fumes from an acid container concealed in household trash, and to the courageous public employees who came to the rescue at Ground Zero on September 11 who now need the State’s help.

“Frankly, you don’t need a medical degree to understand that inhaling large amounts of smoke, poison and crushed glass will lead to respiratory problems,” Silver commented. “The brave souls who are suffering from their 9/11 exposure did not stop to question whether their actions served their own best interests. No one should be questioning their best interests now!”

Silver renewed his promise of years past that his doors will



Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver

always remain open to unions and their leadership and his pledge to work in partnership with PEC on the issues that matter most to this State’s public employees.

“If government matters then governmental employees must matter as well,” Silver said. ♦

## Silver Appoints Meringolo to 9/11 Task Force

Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver announced at the PEC Legislative Breakfast that PEC Chairman Peter Meringolo is his first appointment to the September 11 Workers Protection Task Force.

“I am proud to say that Peter Meringolo is the first of our appointments,” Silver told the crowd. The Assembly can appoint three people to the task force.

“Hopefully with this task force in place, we can begin to give those public employees who were involved in the rescue, recover, clean-up and investigation the respect and dignity that Washington should have been giving them since September 11, 2001.”

## Legislators Turn Out in Record Number

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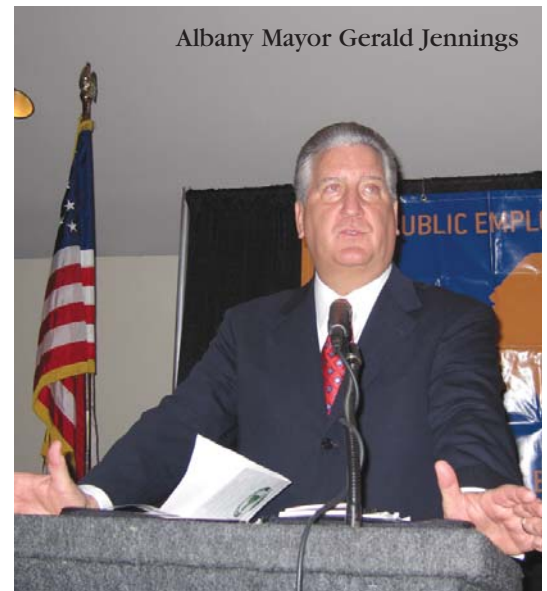
day — law enforcement. He said that the death and wounding of police officers is unacceptable and getting new laws on the books to protect them is a “no brainer.”

“All you have to do is look at the rules of this City and State to see what’s wrong. We were able to pass a series of legislation to crack down on those who shoot or harm police officers,” Golden said. “You will find us there fighting for you so the legislation you need will be passed,” he said. “We’re going to get that single gun. We’re going to look at the death of a police officer and get the death penalty.”

Assemblyman Tedesco, new Minority Leader of the Assembly Republican Conference, said that his goal is to help create the best agenda possible for public employees. “We need to create the best quality of life for everyone in this State. A great part of that is the work you do. When we do legislation that’s important and significant to us, it’s important and significant to all people across New York State because of the work you do.”

Assemblyman Abbate spoke about the 9/11 Presumptive Disability Law and the newly created task force. He stressed the importance of getting the law’s kinks worked out so all those at Ground Zero get what they need and deserve.

In concluding, Abbate referenced the PEC Legislative Agenda booklet and said with some humor, “Your book got a little smaller this year so we must have already passed some of your legislation.” ♦



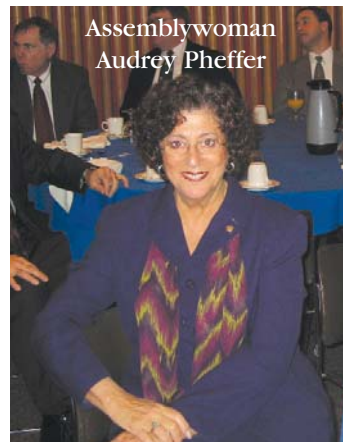
Albany Mayor Gerald Jennings



Floyd Holloway with  
Assemblywoman Susan John



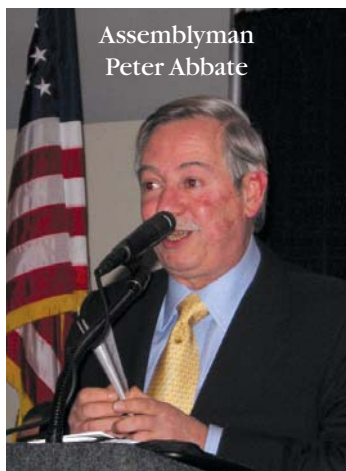
Senator  
David Paterson



Assemblywoman  
Audrey Pheffer



Assemblyman James Tedesco



Assemblyman  
Peter Abbate



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