



PEC Connection

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



Words from the Top

On behalf of the Co-Chairpersons, Trustees and the Board of Directors of the New York State Public Employee Conference, I welcome everyone to our 27th Annual Convention.

Our conference is growing, as is evident by the large turnout of our members and the number of new organizations in attendance this year. There has also been an increase in service provider groups in attendance, which is much appreciated.

Our theme this year is "The New York State Public Employee Conference — Unity Of Purpose — Unity Of Resolve." We need to continue to be united and strong as an organization. With all the fiscal problems facing the City and State, we must ensure that benefits we have fought hard for in areas such as Pension Enhancements and Health, remain intact. Our members deserve that from us and from the Legislators in Albany.

Representatives from both the Senate and Assembly will be on hand for their input and some very important panel discussions. I am very pleased with the strong relationship we have with the Senate and the Assembly and their presence at our Conference is very important. We must continue to work in partnership with them.

As always, the main objective of our Conference is to focus on and formulate our legislative agenda for 2005. We will also conduct the general business of our organization on that day as well.

I am looking forward to a very meaningful and successful convention that will be accomplished with your participation and valuable input. I believe our organization has made great strides toward being a positive force in Albany, while working for the passage of legislation to benefit our members and their families.

I am honored and consider it a privilege to serve as the Chairman of the New York State Public Employee Conference. I appreciate the support of all the member organizations. The New York State Public Employee Conference is becoming stronger than ever.

Conference Kicks Off with Legislative Meeting

More than 75 Labor Leaders, Legislative Directors and Union Representatives gathered on the first official day of the Convention to help PEC formulate its legislative agenda for the upcoming year.

PEC Chairman Peter Meringolo (CCA) welcomed all returning and new members before diving into discussion on one of the organization's top priority bills — the 9/11 Disability Bill.

"The Governor is working on this bill. We're giving him some breathing room in order to get this bill signed into law," Meringolo told the group.

After some discussion amongst the unions in attendance on how much time to give the Governor's office to take action, it was decided to impose an early December deadline. Notice of this decision will be delivered to Albany upon return from the convention.

Newly elected State Senator Diane Savino briefly addressed members, thanking them for supporting her bid for office both in the primary and the general election, and telling members that they now have a true friend in the Senate.

After Senator-Elect Savino finished, the focus shifted back to discussion on other legislation to

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NYS PEC 27th Annual Convention

Caribe Hilton

San Juan, Puerto Rico

Nov. 12-17, 2004



Legislative Committee Meeting

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be included in the 2005 Agenda, including reforming the Taylor Law, Tier Equity, Pension Re-openers, and Binding Arbitration.

Several unions inquired about legislation directly affecting their individual members. Chairman Meringolo said that as the Conference formulates its complete 2005 Agenda, each member union's needs and concerns will be evaluated.

"With more than 75 people in this room today, we are showing the strength and solidarity needed in the labor movement to have a serious impact both in Albany and at City Hall," Mr. Meringolo said. "Our numbers are growing and so will our voice in influencing labor leaders." ♦



Pictured (top left): Harry Nespoli, President, Sanitation Workers; Bob Bishop, Lobbyist; (Left): Kevin Boyle, President, United Public Service Employees Union; James Chirichella, United Public Service Employees; (Right): Yolanda Mitchell, President, Local 1181.



Members Elect PEC Slate to Lead Union in 2005

The following members were unanimously elected on Monday, November 15 at the morning session of the Convention to lead PEC into the new year:

Chairman.....	Peter Meringolo	Correction Captains' Association
Co-Chair	Stephen Cassidy	Uniformed Firefighters' Association
Co-Chair	Anthony Garvey	Lieutenants Benevolent Association
Co-Chair	Harry Nespoli.....	Uniformed Sanitationmen's Association
Co-Chair	Charles J. Morello.....	NY Professional Firefighters Association
Co-Chair	Edward Guzdek.....	Police Conference of New York
Co-Chair	Michael Paladino	Detectives Endowment Association
Co-Chair	Jeff Frayler.....	Suffolk County PBA
Treasurer.....	Joseph Mannion	Sanitation Officers' Association
Recording Secretary	Joseph Collangelo.....	Local 246, SEIU
Corresponding Secretary	Lorraine Seidel	NYS Nurses Association
Trustee.....	Gary DelaRaba	Nassau County PBA
Trustee.....	Kevin Scanlon	NYS Court Clerks Association
Trustee	William P. Lacey	Civil Service Coalition of Bldg., Trades & Municipal Unions

Members Grill Legislators on Union Matters in Albany

Other Union Business Discussed As Well

NYS Assemblywoman Susan John, Assemblyman Peter Abbate, and Ken Riddett, Counsel to the Senate Majority Leader, spent more than an hour on the dais Monday morning answering dozens of questions shot at them from PEC members in regard to labor issues.

Questions ranged from why there is always such doom and gloom when it comes to reporting the status of the budget, to why the State legislature does not place more importance on stopping legislation aimed at hurting the labor movement, to what type of action will be taken on 9/11 bills that will soon sunset.

The issue of binding arbitration was also brought up for discussion. Legislators were asked to please take action on the bill early in the year so the labor movement knows where it stands and is not scrambling come May or June.

Assemblyman Abbate agreed that early action needs to be taken in Albany to prevent a last minute panic. "We should pass this early," he said. "The time is coming up soon again. It's your responsibility though to help make sure this happens."

Ken Riddett said that although many claim Albany is broken and needs to be fixed, "Albany is not broken when it comes to working with labor."

Assemblyman Abbate agreed, saying, "We will go back to Albany and speak about this conference for a long time. We're there for you. Those of you who come to Albany day in and day out know things get done. You can look at the agenda you put forward last year and see that a lot of it has been done."

Assemblywoman John said that PEC has a loud voice in Albany that helps when bills are up for discussion.

"PEC is well positioned to try and deliver a message that needs to be delivered that the public sector provides a true value to New York State," she said. "You are very proud to be public employees and we're proud to have you help us in the roles you do."

Asked why the federal government does not provide more funding to New York, a state considered at high risk for terrorism, the Assemblywoman said, "We're a blue state, not a red state. In terms of federal funding, that means a loss of dollars."

She explained that federal funding guidelines in use today

were established 40 years ago when New York was a wealthier state. Although the circumstances have changed in the past four decades, the formulas have not.

As for the minimum wage legislation passed by the Legislature and vetoed by the Governor, the Legislators agreed that there is a strong possibility of an override, but that type of action needs to be used cautiously.

Other issues discussed at the morning session included injured workers losing their jobs because the workers comp system is faulty, as well as DROP Plans, which Assemblyman Abbate said are "many and scattered. I've done a lot of research into it. Some are set up and work well. In other states, it's been a disaster. We will be giving it another look."

Chairman Peter Meringolo thanked the Albany officials for coming. "I appreciate the relationship we have with both the Senate and the Assembly," he said. "We know your doors are always open and we can come to you. We don't always agree, but we know you're our friends. We want to continue our relationships. Thank you for working with us."

Steve Schlapp, PEC Accountant, gave an official reporting of the organization's finances. In addition, the conference voted on, and unanimously elected, the slate of officers and trustees put forth earlier by Chairman Meringolo. ♦

A Special Appearance



Roman M. Velasco, Labor Secretary to the Governor of Puerto Rico, made a guest appearance on Monday and spoke to PEC members about the history of labor in Puerto Rico and then stayed for a short while after to hear our New York legislators give their opening remarks. Mr. Velasco said he was interested in our system of government and the labor movement in the New York metropolitan area. He also thanked PEC for continuing to come to Puerto Rico for the annual convention.

One Union Gives Survivors a Special Trip

About 25 people received a special trip, compliments of the Port Authority PBA.

Gus Danese, Union President, said his union brought to Puerto Rico surviving family members of Port Authority PBA members killed on 9/11. "We just wanted to do something nice for them," he said.

PEC Chairman Meringolo said the conference would provide these family members with the same gift bags PEC members received upon check-in.

Pension and 2005 Agenda Top Tuesday List

On the first sunny day of the Convention, PEC members filled a conference room for a discussion on pensions in New York State, followed by a question and answer session led by John Black, Counsel.

Mr. Black kicked off the morning with a brief overview of the Tier System, and how each tier developed over time. He then spoke about the 32-Year Cap Bill that was vetoed by the Governor and about various DROP plans put forth in Albany. He said that as PEC pushes its bills through the 2005 Legislative Session, “don’t be discouraged if you get back bad fiscal notes. You can always look at a fiscal situation differently and word things differently to help make your case.”

As for DROP plans, he said they might not necessarily be the best things going, but that there should be another option presented to public employees. While some plans might work, there are drawbacks as well, and everything should be taken into consideration.

“Several plans were looked at by the Senate, but the Assembly ran out of time,” Mr. Black said. “You should consider forming a coalition of all pension plans so you can beat the argument that will arise in Albany that we can’t give to one group without giving to another.”

Following, he took questions from PEC members. Questions were abundant — which kept Mr. Black on his toes for more than an hour — and centered around the future of public employee pension plans and various options for DROP plans, as well as the best means for getting legislation passed in Albany come 2005.

Following Mr. Black’s presentation, the meeting shifted gears to the Legislative Agenda PEC will put forth for the upcoming session.

Lou Matarazzo and Floyd Holloway led the discussion, which began with a review of the 2004 Agenda. Each item on last year’s list was discussed briefly to ascertain whether to include it on the new program.

All “New Initiatives” will remain, except for “Make Workers’ Compensation Work.” It was decided that this is a very serious issue that PEC needs to formulate into legislation. It was mentioned that there is already an existing bill in Albany that PEC will look into and see about supporting.

Another initiative that could be formulated into legislation in 2005 is the “Ensure Safe Work Environment.”

“Maybe we should expand on this subject,” Mr. Matarazzo said, “especially because so many people work in buildings that really should be condemned.”

All Support and Oppose legislation will remain, with further deliberation given to whether to oppose a Constitutional Convention or support it and push for union members to fill as many of the “three delegates per Senate district” as possible.

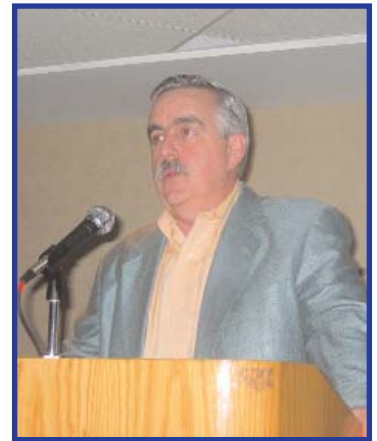
As for “Issues Under Study,” the only matter deleted from the upcoming agenda at the request of the Port Authority PBA is “Extend Binding Arbitration to Port Authority Police Officers” since they were able to secure this in their contract.

Mr. Matarazzo said that “Pension Re-Openers” and “Statewide Variable Supplements Fund” will be kept on the agenda despite the fact there’s a slim chance of them going anywhere.

The “Military Buyback for Veterans” will be modified to include everyone who has served, regardless of where, and “Independent Hearing Officer” — which already passed both the Senate and Assembly — will stay despite the fact that “getting it signed into law is nil,” according to Mr. Matarazzo.

One additional change is to the “Permanent Heart Bill,” which will be updated to include “all employees who enjoy this benefit.”

Chairman Meringolo concluded by saying “The conference only puts forth an agenda that everyone agrees to. This, however, does not stop you from putting in your own legislation.” ♦



***PEC Thanks All This Year's
Guests & Sponsors for
Helping Make this Another
Great Convention***

***Next Year's Conference
Dec. 2-7, 2005***

***Caribe Hilton
San Juan, Puerto Rico***

See You There!

Newsletter Design:

Marci Rosenblum @ Rosenblum Writing & Design Group
845-364-0222

*Specializing in Graphic Design &
Public Relations for Labor Unions*