



# PEC Connection

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



## Words from the Top

*On behalf of the Co-Chair persons and the Board of Directors of the New York State Public Employee Conference, I welcome everyone to our 28th Annual Convention.*

*This was a banner year for our organization. On behalf of all Public Employees of the City and State, I thank Governor George Pataki for signing into law the 9/11 Presumptive Disability Bill. Our Governor fulfilled his commitment to all public employees by not forgetting those who responded so valiantly and unselfishly on September 11, 2001 to what has been deemed one of the most horrific tragedies in our country's history.*

*A very special thank you to Senate Majority Leader Joseph Bruno, Speaker of the Assembly Sheldon Silver and our major sponsors, Senator Martin Golden and Assemblyman Peter Abbate and their respective staffs. Without their hard work and dedication to public employees, this legislation would have been possible. Representatives from both the Senate and Assembly will be on hand for their input and valuable discussions.*

*This was by far the single most important bill ever passed by the NYS Public Employee Conference. I thank my staff — Floyd Holloway, Lout Matarazzo, Joseph Mannion, Bing Markee and his 9/11 committee members — for all their hard work and perseverance to get the job done.*

*As always, the main objective of our Conference is to focus on and formulate our legislative agenda for 2006, which we will do on Wednesday, December 7.*

*I look forward to a meaningful and successful convention that will be accomplished with your participation and valuable input.*

*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 NYS Public Employee Conference is becoming stronger than ever.*

## Conference Kicks Off with Legislative Meeting

PEC Chairman Peter Meringolo (CCA) welcomed what he called "the largest crowd of legislative leaders to date" to kick off the 2005 PEC convention.

In addition to all returning unions, there were also several new members in attendance. "I am ecstatic to have this many union leaders in one room on a Sunday. This is a tremendous reflection on the way our organization has grown," Meringolo said.

Before delving into conversations on the 9/11 Presumptive Disability Law and pending retiree legislation, unions were reminded that if they have any upcoming bills they'll be introducing in Albany and would like PEC support, they must submit information on them to PEC for review. Only legislation that is supported by all member unions can be officially supported by the organization.

The topic of conversation immediately turned to the 9/11 Law. Meringolo briefed everyone on the recent one-day seminar held to talk about and work on refining the law's language. He said that while the State has been very responsive in making sure the bill works, the City has lagged far behind. "I firmly believe the Mayor is doing whatever he can to hold up the bill," Meringolo said.

There was a brief discussion on what members will be appointed to the task force overseeing the



Continued on Page 2

## Legislative Committee Meeting

*Continued from Page 1*

law's implementation and refinement. So far, the following have been appointed: Peter Meringolo, Lou Matarazzo (PEC Legislative Director), Peter Gorman (UFOA) and Dr. Levin from Mt. Sinai. Other appointments are soon to follow. The purpose of the task force is to correct any inequities in the legislation and make recommendations to improve the law. Charles Pastorelli (Local 246 SEIU VP) asked how the 9/11 Law relates to his members who repaired the vehicles used for rescue, recovery and clean-up but who work outside of the area defined by the Law.

Bing Markee (PAPBA) said that while the law unfortunately does not include these workers, this type of issue is what the new task force will be addressing. He stressed that this is the perfect example of why everyone should file the required forms by the deadline, even if they think they don't qualify under the bill's guidelines or if they don't currently have a disability.

Matarazzo said that with a June 14, 2007, deadline for filing the forms, "it would be better to do it now, even if you are unsure you will have any medical problems down the road."

He also said it's important for unions to also tell their retirees about the implications of this new law. "I don't recall there ever being a presumptive bill before that

included retirees," he said. "Make sure your retirees fill out the forms even if they don't have a disability. The window of opportunity is set at two years. They need to be aware of that so they don't miss out on filing if they should need it later on."

The second issue discussed pending retiree legislation in Albany. Meringolo said PEC will be carefully reviewing what was brought to Albany in the past two years. At the suggestion of several members in attendance, PEC will also formulate a statement on the conference's position on the current retiree legislation, which says that if a municipality is going to reduce health insurance coverage for retirees, they must also reduce it for actives. Matarazzo said that since all City workers are covered by one plan, it's not advantageous to have any law that includes them, especially one that has to be renewed every year.

Floyd Holloway said that since both CSEA and the AFL-CIO support the current retiree bill, it's more important than ever that PEC let them know why the group's members are against it as it's currently worded.

Meringolo said that the input received from so many union leaders showed "it's pretty obvious that when we get together, there are some fairly powerful voice in this room. I've said this before — no one does us better than we do ourselves. If we don't stay united and act as one group, then we're crazy. We get so much accomplished in solidarity. There's no union leader in this room who hasn't fought hard for his members. ♦"

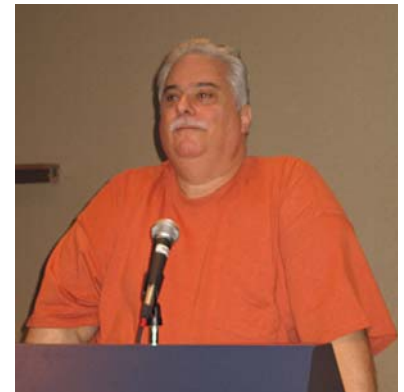


## By-Laws Committee Proposes Changes Allowing Past Union Leaders to Serve as PEC Officers

For the first time in the history of the Public Employee Conference, former union leaders in good standing will be allowed to serve as the organization's chairman or on the board of officers.

Gus Danese (PAPBA), Chairman of PEC's By-Laws Committee, brought forth two amendments to the group's by-laws. The first will allow any current or former union leader to hold any position on the board of officers. He said the justification for this change is to allow PEC to retain its high quality leaders, even pending or after retirement.

The second amendment would extend nominations of officers to every three years instead of the current two years, beginning in January 2007. Danese said this follows the pattern being set by many individual unions that have also extended their officers' terms of office. Officers will be elected by a voice vote at the annual conference. Both of these amendments passed unanimously with no discussion.



## Legislative Leaders Receive Standing Ovation of Thanks for Help with 9/11 Bill at Day 2's Meeting

**N**YS Assemblyman Peter Abbate and Ken Riddett, Counsel to the Senate Majority Leader, received a standing ovation of thanks at the second meeting of the Convention for all their assistance in getting the 9/11 Presumptive Disability Bill signed into law earlier this year.

"Without the help of these two, and so many others, we would not have this new law today," Chairman Peter Meringolo said in bringing the two to the dais.

In past years, Abbate, Riddett and other legislators in attendance underwent tough questioning from PEC members on Capital happenings. The organization decided this year, however, to ease up on the questioning since Abbate and Riddett had already helped PEC with its greatest accomplishment to date.

"Congratulations for accomplishing what some people said could never be done," Riddett said. "It's a credit to Peter's leadership and to all of you. Things get done in this business in Albany based on relationships. Without that, this bill would never have been done. This was really a team effort."

Assemblyman Abbate echoed these thoughts. He said that without the dedication of so many unions, the 9/11 bill would never have become law.

"The most monumental issue on our agenda was taken care of," Meringolo said. "We have to thank these two people because they didn't just stop working at their own levels. They went as far as they needed to in order to help us get this bill signed. They always had our sentiments at heart."

In addition, John Black, Esq. gave a brief rundown of past and future legislative issues. He also spoke about the 9/11 bill and said that a second meeting will be scheduled shortly to further define the law. It was recommended that any PEC members with comments and suggestions should send them to the PEC office for review and then they will be forwarded to John.

He reviewed the former proposed DROP plan and how it is being revised to a PLOP plan, a partial lump sum distribution

plan. He said PEC needs to figure out if the organization is going to be in favor of the plan that the Governor has authorized a study on.

He then proceeded to talk about retiree health insurance plans and how the New York Conference of Mayors is launching an attack on PEC. Their vindictive legislation is because they would like to reduce expenditures in their local municipalities.

Dan DeFedericis (NYSPBA) questioned why so many groups seem to be attacking PEC and the group's agenda, including newspaper editorials that have come out against some of PEC's positions.

Assemblyman Abbate said that despite the negative tone from some groups, "we study your legislation and we know your needs. There might come a point that individual groups need to get out and explain themselves. You might want to get out some public service announcements to combat the negative messages people hear about public employees."

Steve Schlapp, PEC Accountant, gave an official reporting of the organization's finances and stated that PEC is in sound financial condition thanks to the leadership of Chairman Meringolo and the success of the convention. ♦



# Legislative Meeting Outlines Goals for 2006

## Discussion Also Turns to Contracts

After more than four years of having the 9/11 bill lead the PEC legislative agenda, Chairman Peter Meringolo said he was glad to be removing it from the list.

Now, he said, the organization can continue focusing on the other bills of significance to so many in the labor movement. He reminded everyone that in order to get a PEC memo of support for individual union bills, each union should wait until their legislation has been passed by both the Senate and Assembly.

Lou Matarazzo, Floyd Holloway and Bing Markee spearheaded the recap of the 2005 agenda, as well as reviewed items to include on the new program.

All "Ongoing Initiatives" from 2005 will remain for the coming year. Matarazzo said there will be a big push for pension system protections in Albany, something PEC will watch closely. He said that early retirement without reduction of service would probably not pass, but would also be monitored. As for benefit improvements for survivors of workers killed in the line of duty, Matarazzo said there have already been some improvements like Joe Mannion was able to get for Sanitation, so he doesn't see much else being done in this area for the coming year.

When the discussion switched to progressive methods of taxation, Matarazzo deferred to Arthur Cheliotis (CWA Local 1180), who said that "most of us are in the middle class receiving a disproportionately higher tax burden than those with larger incomes. Taxes need to be placed on those most capable of paying."

Extenders did not receive much discussion since all extenders pertaining to PEC members don't expire for another year, except for the Sanitation Heart Bill.

One topic in "Issues Under Study" — Health Care Reforms — brought about significant discussion. Matarazzo explained that what's negotiated for one City worker group is negotiated for all. "Sanitation workers in the streets get the same health protections as police officers," he said. "We'll be monitoring this very carefully. I'm sure there are going to be an attempt to change some things because of the costs involved."

One issue that Joseph Colangelo (SEIU Local 246) said the organization should band together on is opposing residency requirements for public employees. He said that with the cost of living downstate, it's unfair to all workers to dictate where they must live in order to keep their jobs.

All items under "We Support" will remain except for 9/11 Presumptive Disability, since that has been signed into law. One other change is to remove EMTs from the permanent heart bill since they already obtained this benefit.

In reference to COLA improvements, Holloway said "it's an uphill battle, but that doesn't preclude us from seeking them, especially because we have a lame duck administration."

Upon conclusion of the agenda review, the conversation

took a detour to contracts and selling the unborn.

Michael Paladino (DEA) said that "when you sell the unborn, you end up with a union full of disgruntled people."

Several union leaders offered their comments on the tough time unions are facing in settling contracts with the City. However, most agreed that selling the unborn does nothing for the labor movement and in fact, only goes to further hurt workers down the road.

Meringolo applauded those union leaders working diligently to get the best deals they can for their members and said that it would be in everyone's best interest to band together in this area. ♦



**HOLD THE DATE**  
**PEC Legislative Breakfast**  
**Tuesday, February 7, 2006**  
**Albany, NY**

## WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

PEC welcomes the following new unions and officers:

Thomas Willdigg — Nassau County DAI  
 Gary Learned — Nassau County SOA  
 John Marchell — Local 3 IBEW  
 Michael Sigault — NYS Court Clerks Association

**NYSPEC Thanks Magna Care**  
**for the 9/11 Posters**

Newsletter Photos/Stories/Design:

RWD Group  
 845-364-0222

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

*For copies of any photos in this newsletter,  
 call or send an e-mail to marci@rwdgroup.com*