



# Labor Fax

April 20, 2005

Volume 9 Issue 5

## EVERY VOTE COUNTS

By Charles Wowkanech & Laurel Brennan

While we have joined with the labor movement across the country to oppose President Bush's proposal to privatize social security, right here in New Jersey we find ourselves engaged in a campaign to protect the retirement benefits of public employees enrolled in the Public Employee Retirement System. With two candidates endorsed by our Public Employees Council, the New Jersey State AFL-CIO has launched an active campaign to support our union brothers seeking election to the PERS Board of Trustees.

We hope all of our members who are eligible to vote in this election will support AFSCME member Joseph Steele for PERS County Representative and NJEA member Lee Flanagan for PERS Municipal Representative.

With Governor Codey's recent declaration that "public employee entitlements are the driving force behind budget increases each and every year" and his establishment of a commission to "examine" existing benefits, it is more important than ever that the labor movement has a strong voice on this Board.

Though the campaign to elect members to the PERS Board of Trustees may not seem as significant as electing a Governor, Legislators or even local officials, be assured that through our efforts, union members will have a greater say in the outcome of proposals such as Governor Codey's call to open existing contracts, delay raises for public employees, request \$35 million in "give backs" and create a tiered benefit package for new employees.

Since 1997 the New Jersey State AFL-CIO Labor Candidates Program has elected 327 rank-and file members to serve in elected office.

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1998  
Labor Fax  
APEX Award

- NJ State AFL-CIO: The Voice for Working Families in New Jersey -

OPEIU:153

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Additionally, we have worked tirelessly to assure that working families are represented on Boards and Commissions such as this one, and have lobbied successfully for additional appointments to bodies at every level of government.

For more information about this campaign, or about the labor candidates program, please visit [www.njafclcio.org](http://www.njafclcio.org) or call John Shea, COPE Director, at (609)989-8730.

## CODEY SIGNS MINIMUM WAGE HIKE...

On April 12, 2005 Governor Codey signed S-2065 sponsored by Senator Steve Sweeney (D-3) and Assemblyman Albio Sires (D-33). This law raises the minimum wage for New Jersey workers to \$7.15 an hour, with a \$1 per hour "phase in" each of the next two years. This increase to the minimum wage will raise the pay of nearly 200,000 New Jersey residents.

## THEN HE TAKES SOME BACK!

On April 18, 2005, just 6 days after Governor Codey acted to raise the minimum wage, the State Health Benefits Commission (SHBC) voted 3-2 in favor of eliminating the "out-of-pocket" expense cap from the Retiree Prescription Drug Plan. If this regulation is approved, thousands of retired public employees will see their prescription drug costs increase dramatically. Both labor representatives on this Board, Eric Richard and Brian Vols, voted against this proposal while all three Administration representatives voted to support it.

## ORGANIZING VICTORIES

The New Jersey State AFL-CIO is proud to welcome nearly 3,000 new members which have recently won a voice at work and voted to affiliate with the New Jersey State AFL-CIO. These new members are faculty members, graduate assistants and teaching assistants at Rutgers University; instructors at Lincoln Technical Institute in Mahwah; and teachers, assistant teachers and social workers at the Paterson Head Start program.

## A REASON TO CELEBRATE

117 IUOE Local 68 members working at Medco Health Solutions in Willingboro recently ratified their first contract with their employer. All workers at this site are now union members.

## ORGANIZING INSTITUTE

The AFL-CIO Organizing Institute (OI) offers a paid training and placement program for entry-level organizers. For more information visit [www.organize.aflcio.org](http://www.organize.aflcio.org).

## ON THE ROAD

Officers and Staff of the New Jersey State AFL-CIO:  
 ...addressed Chemical Council of New Jersey's Board of Directors and Executive Committee on chemical plant security training.  
 ...participated in SEIU 1199 rally in support of nursing home workers.  
 ...addressed IUOE Local 68 membership meeting.  
 ...met with officials from Excelon Corporation regarding merge with PSE&G.  
 ...met with AFL-CIO President John Sweeney and Chairman of the Republican Labor Caucus Congressman Frank LoBiondo.  
 ...attended 25th annual conference on public sector labor relations law.  
 ...participated in Construction Industry Career Day at Brookdale Community College.  
 ...participated in the bi-state TOPoff 3 disaster drill.  
 ...conducted LEAP courses for members of 1199 SEIU NY and CWA Locals 1058, 1062 & 1150.  
 ...attended National Building and Construction trades Legislative Conference.  
 ...attended Washington reception for Senator Harrison A. Williams Archives Foundation.

## STOP CAFTA

Congress is expected to act soon on the proposed Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA). If approved, this legislation would drastically exacerbate the job loss created by NAFTA by extending the free trade zone to five more Central American nations and the Dominican Republic. Please visit [www.njafclcio.org](http://www.njafclcio.org) to find out how you can send them an automatic, pre-written fax urging them to oppose this bill.

## NEW FUNDING REQUIRED

This September's school budget referendums will most likely commit the remaining funding available for school construction. According to CEO Jack Spencer, this lack of funds will leave financing for certain school construction projects uncertain by December. The New Jersey State AFL-CIO supports S-2294 (Rice) which is currently pending and authorizes approximately \$2 billion in additional funding for future construction.

## CUSTOMIZED TRAINING GRANTS

Local unions and employers can obtain funds for employee training programs through the New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development's Labor Customized Training grants. Funds for training are available to upgrade skills of new or current employees. Resources are also available for employers moving to or expanding in New Jersey. Grants awarded require approval by the employer and local union. For more information, contact John Bicsko, Employment and Training Coordinator at (609) 989-8730.

## CONGRATULATIONS!

Monmouth/Ocean County CLC President Wyatt Earp was elected unanimously to serve as the Chairman of the Ocean County Democratic Organization. Brother Earp is also the International Representative for IBEW's Third District.

## Upcoming Events

April 28, 2005	Workers' Memorial Day Commemoration Rutgers Labor Education Center
May 2-3, 2005	16-Hour Confined Space Course IBEW Local 456 North Brunswick
May 2-4, 2005	LEAP Training Peer Counselor Train-the-Trainer Rutgers Labor Education Center
May 4-6, 2005	Confined Space Course Train-the-Trainer IBEW Local 456 North Brunswick
May 11, 2005	New Jersey State AFL-CIO Retirees Committee Meeting Rutgers Labor Education Center
June 14, 2005	New Jersey State AFL-CIO Labor Awards Ceremony Borgata Hotel Casino and Spa Atlantic City
June 14-15, 2005	New Jersey State AFL-CIO Legislative/COPE Endorsement Conference Borgata Hotel Casino and Spa Atlantic City
August 5-7, 2005	Labor Candidates School

## CALLING ALL CANDIDATES

The deadline for individuals to declare their candidacy for November's elections has passed. This year the New Jersey State AFL-CIO will hold their Labor Candidates School August 5-7 at the Rutgers Labor Education Center in New Brunswick. For more information about the Labor Candidates program, or our Labor Candidates school visit [www.njafclcio.org](http://www.njafclcio.org) or call John Shea, COPE Director, at (609) 989-8730.

## KEEPING CHILDREN SAFE

The New Jersey State AFL-CIO is a proud member of the Safe Child Consortium of New Jersey. Established in December 2004 to assist with the implementation of the New Jersey Child Welfare Reform plan, this unique partnership of individuals, labor, corporations and foundations is committed to promoting strong communities and protecting our state's children. To find out how your union or members can help support this initiative by providing financing, volunteering time to work with abused and neglected children, reporting child abuse or becoming foster parents, please contact Steve Lenox, Legislative Affairs Coordinator at (609) 989-8730.