



# Labor Fax

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## THE HEALTH CARE REFORM EFFORT STARTS NOW

By Charles Wowkanech & Laurel Brennan

Health care reform is a once in a lifetime opportunity, and the campaign to achieve real reform is happening right now. Over the generations, our country has seen a handful of progressive movements that have shaped and built up our nation: the women's suffrage movement of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the passage of the National Labor Relations Act in 1935, and the civil rights movement of the 1960s. All of these efforts were led by groups of individuals fully committed to the goal of enhancing the lives of current and future generations.

There is no doubt that this year, we can make health care reform the next great accomplishment of our country. After 40 years of work, we have arrived at a point where all of the conditions are right to achieve quality affordable health care for all. Our President understands that health care is essential to a thriving middle class and a prosperous economy. Furthermore, the Congress has rallied behind reform and is doing everything in its power to have an effective and ambitious plan prepared for the President's signature by September.

The most important component to achieve health care reform however, depends on us. The labor movement, which has been an essential force behind most of our greatest country's achievements, will once again need to mobilize and lead the way to health care reform. By taking on this monumental challenge, we can make sure that our future health care system is beneficial to all working families.

Already, our efforts in the labor movement have led a majority of New Jersey's Congressional Delegation to work constructively on drafting new health care legislation which includes a public insurance option. For instance, as a member of the Senate Finance Committee, Senator Menendez has worked with his colleagues to address the complicated issue of funding health care reform. The Finance Committee is holding a roundtable series to discuss strategies for generating savings and for improving quality and efficiency of the medical care delivery system.



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Additionally, Senators Menendez and Lautenberg have both been strong proponents of including a public insurance option in the plan for reform. The public option is not only important for increasing quality and decreasing the cost of care, but this component will also help create a uniquely American brand of health care reform.

At the moment, reform is underway, but we must remain vigilant and make sure that we continue in a positive direction. This will require us to stay active and stay informed during the summer months. Although, we have earned a nice vacation with our families, we cannot let down our guard. We can be sure that our opponents will not rest until they do everything in their power to defeat health care reform. To keep everyone involved, the New Jersey State AFL-CIO will reach out to you during the coming months and ask you to be directly involved in what is one of the most crucial campaigns of our time.

Our commitment as a state labor movement will be vital to the national effort. New Jersey's working families have been tested time and again and do not back down from challenges no matter what the odds. We realize that there is simply too much at stake and too much to lose from inaction. We have all felt the pains of a broken health care system and must prevent the possibility of losing more of our wages, benefit cuts, and higher co-pays.

When we are successful, health care reform will mark an unprecedented social and economic victory for our country and the labor movement. Not only will reform help to revitalize our country's middle class but it will also function to benefit countless future generations to come.

## 9/11 VOLUNTEER, EDUARDO TORRES ASKS CONGRESS: "RESPOND TO OUR HEALTH NEEDS"

9/11 Ground Zero volunteer and a union plumber from UA Local 14, Eduardo Torres stood before a House subcommittee on Wednesday, April 22, 2009 to explain why we need to institute a permanent health monitoring program for 9/11 volunteers. Before his emergency work at Ground Zero, Torres was a healthy and active individual. However, he must now contend with chronic respiratory and stomach problems. Torres said that had he known what would happen to him, there was "not a doubt in my mind" that he would still volunteer. Torres believes those that served their country during 9/11 deserve quality medical care. As it stands now, the current health monitoring program for 9/11 volunteers needs to be renewed annually. The bill being considered by Congress now would make the health monitoring program permanent, thereby ensuring that 9/11 volunteers will receive the reliable treatment they deserve for their health needs.

**ON THE ROAD**

Officers and staff of the New Jersey State AFL-CIO:

...Conducted LEAP training and assistance for members of IBEW Local 3 and their HR Department at Asco Custom Switch in Florham Park.

...Co-conducted layoff preparation workshops for members of CWA Locals 1060 & 1061 at Alcatel-Lucent in New Providence and Whippany.

...Presented our New Jersey Survival Guide to Unemployment to over 200 members of AFSCME and JNESO who were laid off at Kessler Memorial Hospital in Hammonton, and also to 80 members of CWA 1032, OPEIU Local 32 and 153 being dislocated from Passaic County Juvenile Detention Center.

...Hosted the 2009 Organizing Institute at the Rutgers University Inn and Conference Center in New Brunswick

...Joined in Workers Memorial Day services in Atlantic City and New Brunswick.

...Hosted the 8th Annual Retirees Legislative Forum in Edison

...Conducted the OSHA 10-course for teachers at Gloucester County Tech.

...Conducted 8 classes in Chemical Security Training for International Paint in Union.

...Held a 30-hour Construction Safety course at Local 269 with over 20 journeymen receiving cards.

...Conducted 4 separate Safe School Training for state high school and vocational school teachers at the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey and the Learning Resource Center in Morris Plains.

...Certified employees at IBEW Local 269 and WR Grace in Bergen County in Blood Borne Diseases, CPR, and First Aid.

...Launched a new partnership initiative with Wakefern, Inc. and UFCW Local 152 to implement Safety and Health Committee training for ShopRite stores in New Jersey.

**'09 LEGISLATIVE/COPE ENDORSEMENT CONFERENCE  
HOTEL SPACE LIMITED! RESERVE A ROOM TODAY**

The Borgata has just informed us that there are only a limited number of rooms remaining and recommends that all those interested in staying at the hotel reserve a room as soon as possible. Please don't miss your opportunity to attend this important conference. To guarantee room availability, please call 1-866-MYBORGATA today.

The 2009 Legislative/COPE Endorsement Conference will be held at the Borgata Hotel Casino and Spa in Atlantic City from June 16-17, 2009. We are very pleased to announce our invited keynote speakers:

**Vice President Joe Biden**

**Governor Jon Corzine**

**Richard Trumka, AFL-CIO Secretary-Treasurer**

**House Speaker Joseph Roberts**

With important endorsements to be made for Governor and State Assembly and with a record number of labor candidates running for office, union members need to make their voices heard at the 2009 Legislative/COPE Endorsement Conference.

**Upcoming Events**

June 2, 2009	Primary Election Day
June 4, 2009	OSHEP Public Seminars New Brunswick, NJ
June 16, 2009	COPE Luncheon Atlantic City, NJ
June 16-17, 2009	Legislative/COPE Endorsement Conference Atlantic City, NJ
June 25, 2009	Health Care Lobby Day Washington, DC
June 25, 2009	LEAP Refresher Course New Brunswick, NJ
August 15-16, 2009	Labor Candidates School New Brunswick, NJ

For more information on any events listed, please check our online calendar at [www.njafclcio.org](http://www.njafclcio.org).

**BOARD OF PUBLIC UTILITIES (BPU) PREVAILING  
WAGE BILL ADVANCES**

A-3372, supported by the New Jersey State AFL-CIO and sponsored by Assemblypersons Barnes, Diegnan, Love and Egan was released by the Assembly Labor Committee on May 11, 2009 by a vote of 6-2. The bill applies prevailing wage requirements to construction projects connected with Board of Public Utilities financial assistance. Voting in favor of the bill were Chairman Egan (D-17), Vice-Chairwoman Evans (D-35), Assemblyman DeAngelo (D-14), Assemblywoman Oliver (D-34), Assemblyman Scaleria (D-36) and Assemblyman Dancer (R-30). Voting against the bill were Assemblymen Doherty (R-23) and Webber (R-26). The Senate version (S-2340: Sweeney / Buono) has also been released from Committee.

**NON-PARTISAN ELECTION VICTORIES**

Voters in several communities went to the polls on Tuesday, May 12, 2009 to elect candidates to non-partisan municipal government offices. Congratulations to Kurt Bicking, IBEW 827 for his election to the Audobon Borough Commission. Additional congratulations to Brother Vincent Addeo, IAM for receiving enough votes to proceed to the Hoboken Council run-off election to be held on June 9, 2009. Working in partnership with Central Labor Councils, Building Trades Councils, and affiliated unions, the New Jersey State AFL-CIO Labor Candidates Program has achieved 551 election victories since the program began in 1997.

**NATIONAL LOBBY DAY FOR HEALTH CARE REFORM**

Join over 25,000 union members, health care activists, and community leaders in Washington, DC to lobby our members of Congress urging them to enact comprehensive health care reform now. Working families cannot afford to wait any longer for health care reform. By standing in solidarity in our nation's capital we can make our voices heard and drive our leaders to action.

**What:** Mass mobilization of health care activists

**When:** Thursday, June 25, 2009 at 11:00 a.m.

**Where:** U.S. Congress, Washington, DC

Don't miss your chance to be a part of the national movement for ensuring quality affordable health care for all. Contact the New Jersey Partnership for Working Families Field Coordinator, Lee Sandberg at (609) 989-8730 or [lsandberg@njafclcio.org](mailto:lsandberg@njafclcio.org) for additional information.

**LABOR CANDIDATES SCHOOL SET FOR AUGUST**

The New Jersey State AFL-CIO 13<sup>th</sup> Annual Labor Candidates School is scheduled for August 15-16, 2009 at Eagleton Institute for Politics in New Brunswick, New Jersey. Since the founding of the Labor Candidates Program, New Jersey union members have achieved 551 election victories, more than any other state in the nation. All union members seeking election to office in 2009 are asked to please contact COPE Director John Shea at (609) 989-8730 or [cope@njafclcio.org](mailto:cope@njafclcio.org) to enroll.

**JOIN US FOR OSHEP PUBLIC SEMINARS AT RUTGERS UNIVERSITY**

The Rutgers/New Jersey State AFL-CIO Occupational Safety and Health Education Program and Union of Rutgers Administrators are hosting two free public seminars at the Rutgers University Labor Education Center Auditorium scheduled for Thursday, June 4, 2009. The morning session will be from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. covering Swine Flu Awareness and Preparedness. The afternoon session will be from 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. on Indoor Air Quality. For more information and to register for one or both of these seminars, please visit the Occupational Safety Health page at [www.njafclcio.org](http://www.njafclcio.org).

**LEAP CONDUCTS SPRING TRAIN-THE-TRAINER**

The recent Spring Labor Employment Action Project (LEAP) Train-the-Trainer Peer Advocate course, conducted in cooperation with the New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development was attended by 28 union staff, officers, and members representing 15 different local unions in a variety of different workplaces throughout the state. The course included interactive activities, live internet exercises, a review of rapid response services and the unemployment insurance process, and site visits to local "one-stops" throughout the state. For more information regarding LEAP services, please contact LEAP Coordinators Nancy Miller (973) 614-0049 and Paul Cenerino (609) 989-8730.

**2009 ORGANIZING INSTITUTE A MAJOR SUCCESS**

The 2009 Organizing Institute (OI) saw an incredible turnout with 46 students and nine teaching fellows filling the halls and classrooms of the Rutgers University Inn and Conference Center in New Brunswick, New Jersey. The OI training was held from April 24-26, 2009 giving participants a chance to immerse themselves and learn about the essentials of union organizing. The three day program included instruction on one-on-one communication skills; how to move workers to take action; leadership identification; and the elements of an organizing campaign.

The New Jersey State AFL-CIO thanks all those students, teachers, and union sponsors that were essential to making this year's Organizing Institute such a success.

**21ST NATIONAL OBSERVANCE OF WORKERS' MEMORIAL DAY**

Workers and their unions are still waging a determined fight against workplace hazards. This year's commemoration of Workers' Memorial Day observed on Tuesday, April 28, 2009 demonstrated that our resolve is as strong as ever and that we have made great progress in our ongoing effort to reduce workplace injuries and deaths.

An impressive amount of affiliates helped organize and participate in Workers' Memorial Day Services throughout the state. Some of the events included the 12<sup>th</sup> Annual Workers' Memorial Day Service sponsored by the New Jersey State AFL-CIO and Atlantic/Cape May County Central Labor Council and the 6<sup>th</sup> Annual Workers' Memorial Day Mass sponsored by the Mercer County Central Labor Council and the Mercer/Burlington Building Trades.

We must continue to build partnerships, and spread awareness about workplace safety and health through training and education. Together, we can brainstorm solutions that will ultimately help with our common goal to prevent tragedies from occurring in New Jersey's workplaces.

**8TH ANNUAL RETIREES' LEGISLATIVE FORUM STRIKES CHORD WITH HEALTH CARE ADVOCATES**

The New Jersey State AFL-CIO Retirees held their 8th Annual Retirees' Legislative Forum at UAW Region 9 in Edison, New Jersey on Tuesday, May 12, 2009. The event generated an unprecedented turnout of over 225 union retirees and featured a distinguished and insightful panel of speakers including Governor Jon Corzine and Health Care for America Now (HCAN) Deputy Campaign Manager, Ethan Rome.

Governor Corzine explained how important health care reform is to the future of New Jersey's working families and how a more efficient health care system will help to get our economy back on track. Ethan Rome, HCAN Deputy Campaign Manager, put into perspective just how important this opportunity is and how if we work together we can achieve quality affordable health care for all within the year.