Labor Fax

December 28, 2007 Volume 11, Issue 6

Labor Fax Co-Editors:

Charles Wowkanech, President — Laurel Brennan, Secretary-Treasurer

Associate Editor:

Christine Rampolla

(609) 989-8730 • www.njaflcio.org

REFLECTIONS—2007

By Charles Wowkanech & Laurel Brennan

As we reflect on all that our State's labor movement has accomplished, we remember facing these challenges and opportunities together. In partnership with our Central Labor Councils, Building Trades Councils, affiliates and coalition partners, we organized more workers into unions; elected pro-working family legislators; successfully lobbied for legislation that protects and benefits all working families; and provided more training programs to workers throughout the State.

The New Jersey State AFL-CIO Labor 2007 Program was the most aggressive union member political education and mobilization initiative ever undertaken in an "off-year" election. Labor's efforts to register, educate, mobilize and deliver union household votes for our endorsed candidates clearly made the difference, electing 137 endorsed candidates in 2007, including seven rank-and-file union members to the New Jersey State Legislature.

Our elected officials stood with us, to remind New Jersey's employers that every worker has the right to organize to gain a voice at work. Despite the Bush Administrations' continued gutting of the NLRB and escalating employer interference in organizing drives, 2007 was a banner year in organizing victories in New Jersey. Due to the unified support of the New Jersey labor movement and the workers who opted for union representation, our New Jersey labor family expanded.

With these accomplishments in mind, we recognize and appreciate the hard work and dedication demonstrated by each and every labor leader and rank-and-file member who joined together to achieve respect and dignity for New Jersey's working families, and look forward to the challenges ahead. The demands we will face in 2008 will clearly require a renewed sense of strength and solidarity, and a fierce commitment to continue to build New Jersey's labor movement. Together, we will have the opportunity to elect leaders who will make health care affordable, retirement more secure, and restore our freedom to form unions. Union members will make the 2008 elections a mandate on working family issues, and will continue to hold candidates for office at every level accountable to progressive reform and elect a President and a Congress pledged to get the job done.

2007 — A YEAR IN REVIEW

The successes we achieved in 2006 gave us motivation to pursue an even more aggressive agenda in 2007. We set the tone for our year in January by:

- Calling on Rutgers University to respect the rights of university administrators and sign onto a neutrality agreement. At the urging of Governor Jon S. Corzine, and several top lawmakers, an agreement was signed and workers continued signing cards demanding recognition as the Union of Rutgers Administrators (URA-AFT).
- Commencing "Operation Clean Sweep 2007," an effort to ensure the accuracy of union membership files, allowing us to improve our successful election programs.
- Hosting the 2007 New Jersey Occupational Safety and Health Conference, in partnership with the Heldrich Center for Workforce Development. Over 120 participants attended workshop sessions on a variety of topics including Pandemic Flu, Workplace Violence, Ergonomics, Workers Compensation, OSHA's Enforcement and Cooperative Programs, and Emergency Response.
- Holding a meeting of the OSHEP Advisory Board, at which Board members agreed to a five-year strategic plan. OSHEP staff also updated the "Security Awareness and Preparedness Workbook for the Chemical and Petroleum Sectors," held classes for teachers through UMDNJ's Safe Schools Program, and conducted a CPR class for members of OPEIU Local 153.
- Participating in New Jersey PLACE Advisory Committee to monitor the ongoing process of negotiating articulation agreements between apprenticeship programs, community colleges, and four-year institutions.

Although it it the shortest month of the year, February certainly was full of accomplishments. In just 28 days, we:

- Joined U.S. Senator Bob Menendez as he chaired an organizing panel, focusing on the neutrality agreement at Rutgers University, the Employee Free Choice Act, and workers' rights to freely choose a union.
- Provided LEAP training, newsletters, workshops, One Stop Center tours, and materials to RWDSU Local 108, CWA/IUE Local 416, and USW Local 4-575, who were undergoing plant closings and layoffs, affecting several hundred union members.

1998 Labor Fax APEX

- Facilitated a Security Awareness and Preparedness Train-the-Trainer Course for representatives of the Chemical and Petroleum industries.
- Applauded NJ Commissioner of Labor and Workforce Development David Socolow as he testified before the United State Senate Sub-Committee on Interstate Commerce, Trade and Tourism on our state's initiative to prevent abusive sweatshop labor conditions.
- Elected two union members to local Boards of Fire Commissioners.
- Met with representatives of the Machinists Union to establish a Diesel Mechanic Apprenticeship program in conjunction with IAM signatory trucking companies.

It was the hard work of our affiliates, not the Luck of the Irish, that helped us in March as we:

- Marked the first time in the nearly 30-year history of the Casino industry in Atlantic City that casino dealers voted to form a union, when almost 800 workers at Caesars voted overwhelmingly to form a union with the United Auto Workers.
- Recognized the bi-partisan group of New Jersey Congressmen whose votes on the Employee Free Choice Act, which seeks to reform our country's national labor law, resulted in passage of the bill in the House of Representatives.
- Attended a U.S. Senate Subcommittee on Transportation Safety, Infrastructure Security and Water Quality hearing, chaired by Senator Frank R. Lautenberg, where Governor Corzine and Congressional Members testified against the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's proposed preemption of States' chemical security regulations.
- Served on the host committee of the New Jersey State Apprenticeship Conference, providing valuable workshops and engaging activities designed to enhance professional skills.
- Sponsored the 4th Annual Women in Leadership Development Conference, providing panel discussions to attendees on building and shaping the labor movement and mobilizing around issues such as immigration and organizing.

With Winter behind us, we were ready to "Spring" into action in April by:

- Electing nine graduates of the Labor Candidates Program to School Boards across the State.
- Standing with casino dealers at Trump Plaza in Atlantic City as the NLRB supervised their vote to form a union with the United Auto Workers, which resulted in 324-129 count in favor of the workers who voted "yes" to a voice at work.
- Addressing 24 union members on the serious challenges of mass lay-offs and plant closings, as well as other opportunities provided by life-long learning, New Jersey's One-Stop Career Centers and other valuable services, through the LEAP Peer Counselor Training Program.
- Participating in the Construction Industry Career Day at Brookdale Community College in Lincroft, providing students and educators with information regarding the Youth Transition to Work Program (YTTW) and NJ PLACE programs.
- Developing an 8-hour Customized Safety and Health Workbook for the Pharmaceutical Industry, in partnership with the HealthCare Institute of New Jersey (HINJ). The 139-page Workbook was utilized in a public program for representatives of 14 NJ pharmaceutical companies.
- Participating in several Workers' Memorial Day observations to commemorate those who have died in workplace catastrophes, suffered diseases because of exposure to toxic substance or have been injured because of dangerous conditions, and rededicated ourselves to the fight for safe workplaces.

Unfortunately, there wasn't much time for us to stop and smell the May flowers. This month we:

- Hosted a National Town Hall Meeting with U.S. Senator Barack Obama at the War Memorial in Trenton, where an enthusiastic hall full of workers had the opportunity to pose questions to the Presidential Candidate on his plans to solve the health care crisis, protect the disappearing retirement savings of workers, reduce the outsourcing of good jobs and restore workers' rights to form unions and bargain collectively.
- Submitted public comments to the Minimum Wage Advisory Commission, urging the enactment of an automatic annual Cost of Living Adjustment to the minimum wage based on the standard average weekly wage.
- Honored Monsignor John J. Gilchrist, a spiritual leader to the New Jersey labor movement, union member and educator at the Holy Cross Rectory, on his 50th Ordination Anniversary.
- Held the New Jersey State AFL-CIO Retirees 6th Annual Eldercare Conference, with 200 retirees in attendance to hear State Senator Joseph Vitale and speakers on Medicare Part D and Nursing Home Reform.
- Facilitated a Train-the-Trainer Course for representatives of the Chemical and Petroleum, Water Treatment, Utilities and Pharmaceutical industries; and on-site training courses for the entire workforce of Grace Company in Rio Grande, and Houghton Chemical Corporation in Carlstadt on Security Awareness and Preparedness.
- Elected three union members to non-partisan Municipal Offices.

As we reached the mid-point of 2007, it was time to assess our progress, and mobilize for the upcoming months. Together, we:

- Witnessed delegates of the COPE Conference pledge support to 42 rank-and-file Labor Candidates and endorse a slate of candidates who would run for 120 seats of the New Jersey Legislature in November.
- Fought back an anti-union campaign at Bally's in Atlantic City, resulting in an overwhelming vote by casino workers to form a union with the UAW.

- Delivered LEAP technical assistance and materials to 150 members of USW Local 149 losing their jobs due to the Weyerhauser fire in Closter, and to AFSCME Local 1199J for 210 members being dislocated from the closing of the New Community Home Health Care program in Newark.
- Worked with the leadership of UNITEHERE to develop a curriculum for workers in the Commercial Laundry industry, and delivered training to members of UNITEHERE Local 284, representing five commercial laundry facilities, in three languages (English, Spanish, and French-Creole).
- Welcomed CWA Local 1012 into our New Jersey State AFL-CIO family, as a new affiliate.

We didn't let the dog days of summer get us down in July! Feeling reenergized by the sun, we:

- Witnessed Governor Corzine sign into law A-4009, which debars certain employers from public work and establishes criminal penalties for the misclassification of construction workers as independent contractors, allowing employers to avoid certain financial obligations to the state and federal governments.
- Provided LEAP materials and assistance to ILA Local 1478-2 for 45 members being dislocated in Newark.
- Attended the 2007 National Department of Labor Workforce Innovations Conference in Kansas City, Missouri.
- Participated in a Labor and Workforce Development roundtable hosted by the Hispanic Directors Association of New Jersey (HDANJ) at Rutgers University to define the principal barriers to the advancement of the Hispanic workforce, particularly the working poor and the marginally employed.
- Collaborated with new consortium members to develop a Diesel Technician Apprenticeship Program with IAM.

The lazy days of summer didn't slow us down in August at all. We:

- Participated on two panels at the AFL-CIO Workers' Voice Legislative Issues Forum in Chicago.
- Graduated 39 union members from the 11th annual Labor Candidates' School in collaboration with the Eagleton Institute of Politics at Rutgers University. The course offered union members seeking office an opportunity to fine-tune their campaign skills in areas such as fundraising, public speaking and media relations.
- Celebrated organizing victories at Caesars in Atlantic City, bringing the total number of gaming employees forming unions in Atlantic City since March to 3,600.
- Conducted LEAP briefings for USW Local 4-149 in Edison and SEIU Local 617 in Newark.
- Established a new partnership with the New Jersey Hospital Association, JNESO, and the Office of Homeland Security and Preparedness to develop a Security Awareness and Preparedness training course for the HealthCare Sector.

By September we were geared up for the upcoming Election season. We were prepared for the fight and in September we:

- Observed Labor Day, starting with 113th annual Peter J. McGuire Labor Day Celebration on the Battleship New Jersey.
- Kicked off the Labor 2007 Program, designed to empower union voters to make informed decisions at the polls in November and elect pro-working family candidates who will represent us in Trenton, by providing educational materials to affiliates and commencing labor-to-labor walks.
- Joined U.S. Representative Frank Pallone at UMDNJ to seek additional funding for the monitoring and treatment of illnesses being experienced by rescue and recovery workers who responded to the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001.
- Witnessed the 2007 Legislative Conference delegation unanimously approving resolutions calling on all affiliates to join our efforts to secure basic rights for all workers in the Printing industry, and establish a long-term funding formula for the New Jersey State AFL-CIO COPE Program.
- Launched a newly designed website, bringing the most current information to our affiliates, and offering working families the opportunity to more actively participate in our lobbying and political programs and learn about organizing campaigns, training programs, and other activities around the State.
- Testified at the Assembly Outsourcing and Off-shoring Commission Meeting, recommending several actions state government should take to minimize the effects of outsourcing on New Jersey jobs.

With the goal of electing more union members into public office, and making sure that New Jersey's working families were heard, we kept the momentum going in October by:

- Conducting a massive member education, persuasion, and get-out-the-vote (GOTV) effort to ensure the election of labor candidates, who will fight for the rights of workers in the Statehouse.
- Uniting with Senators Lautenberg and Menendez for a rally, calling on all members of Congress to make overriding a veto on the State Children's Health Insurance Program a priority.
- Participating in the Governor's Conference on Employment for People with Disabilities, entitled "DiscoverAbility," as part of an ongoing partnership which focuses on the development of employment opportunities for people with disabilities.
- Hosting the NJ State AFL-CIO Retirees 6th Annual Legislative Conference, attended by over 200 retirees. Speakers included labor candidates and the Legislative Director of the National AFL-CIO, describing the launch of their 2008 Healthcare Initiative.
- Facilitated a Security Awareness and Preparedness Train-the-Trainer Course for representatives of the Chemical and Petroleum industries; conducted forklift

training for workers at Grace Performance Chemicals; and trained workers at Ferro and Bostik, Inc. in Paulsboro on Security Awareness and Preparedness.

Working families went to the polls in huge numbers on Election Day ensuring victory for over 137 endorsed candidates. In November we:

- Mobilized a GOTV effort resulting in our labor movements' 476th rank-and-file union member victory since the inception of the Labor Candidates Program, far outpacing any other state in the union.
- Spearheaded a steering committee representing Offices of Emergency Management and unions in Essex, Middlesex, Atlantic and Cape May Counties to coordinate the pilot program of the Emergency Response Support Program at Task Force One headquarters in Lakehurst.
- Hosted a talk by John Glaser, the Grass Roots Manager of the NCPSSM (National Council to Preserve Social Security and Medicare), through the Retirees Committee. A comprehensive report of the presentation was prepared and is being circulated to retiree chapters statewide.
- Conducted a LEAP workshop for 55 members of RWDSU Local 1102 being dislocated from Medco in Pinebrook.

With holiday celebrations on our mind, we had one final month to make a difference in the lives of working families. In December, we kept up the pace by:

- Encouraging membership interaction with our State's Legislators on Paid Family Leave Lobby Day, reminding our legislators that workers should not have to choose between their jobs and their ability to spend the first critical weeks of a child's life, or between a paycheck and a desire to care for a seriously ill family member.
- Rallying with the Essex/West Hudson CLC, union members, elected officials, religious leaders and community activists, to commemorate International Human Rights Day Rally in support of workers unionizing at Newark Airport.
- Conducting a LEAP training for USW Local 2026 members at US Pipe and Foundry in Burlington, to address the loss of 140 manufacturing jobs early in 2008, and provided LEAP technical assistance to seven UAW members laid off from Bally's, Caesar's and the Tropicana in Atlantic City.
- Facilitating a Security Awareness and Preparedness Train-the-Trainer Course for representatives of the Chemical and Petroleum industries and training workers at Penetone in Carlstadt.

2007 was a victorious year for workers organizing for a voice on the job. New Jersey State AFL-CIO Officers, Staff, and Affiliates supported organizing campaigns and shared representation election victories for newly organized workers with…

- AFSCME Local 2303A, which represents 180 municipal employees in Atlantic City, and won an election versus an independent union and raiding operation.
- Health Professionals and Allied Employees, AFT (HPAE) who received notice that the National Labor Relations Board rejected an appeal filed by South Jersey Healthcare (SJH) against the nurses' union vote, ending an appeal process and paving the way for union negotiations to begin.
- Approximately 2,000 Administrative, Professional, and Supervisory Staff at Rutgers University, after a highly visible campaign of Rutgers URA-AFT workers trying to organize under card check neutrality.
- Casino Slot technicians and cashiers at Caesars, and Slot Techs at Tropicana Casino and Resorts, who voted in favor of forming a union with the UAW.
- Casino Dealers at Tropicana, Bally's and Trump, who also chose to be represented by UAW in Atlantic City.
- 95 Custodians employed by Aramark Facility Services working in the Cherry Hill Public School District, who voted to join OPEIU Local 153.

Together, we confronted labor challenges facing our members in 2007. We rallied and marched in solidarity with…

- Members of UNITEHERE working at Crown Plaza Meadowlands in Secaucus in March, picketing their employer RosDev for a fair contract.
- AFL-CIO Secretary Treasurer Richard Trumka and Congressional Members in support of Atlantic City Casino Dealers forming a union with the United Auto Workers.
- 750 RNs represented by HPAE at South Jersey Health Care Regional Medical Center in November, in their struggle for a first contract.
- Employees of HDS organizing with UNITEHERE and Fleet Service Employees at Continental Airlines organizing with TWU, both at Newark Airport.
- UFCW Local 1360 at the Candlelight Vigil for Change, joining with thousands of Americans across the nation calling for Wal-Mart to change and become a responsible and moral company.
- Members of IBEW Local 1158 on strike from Pella Windows and Doors in West Caldwell.

The labor family in New Jersey lost many good friends in 2007. Though we said goodbye to the following individuals, their contributions will never be forgotten:

- Tom Canzanella - President of PFANJ
- Mario DeCarlos - President of Musicians 204-373
- Sandy Tillet - Safety and Health Activist and Educator

THE OFFICERS AND STAFF OF THE NEW JERSEY STATE AFL-CIO WISH ALL OF OUR UNION BROTHERS AND SISTERS A HAPPY, HEALTHY NEW YEAR!