



The Mobilizer



Volume 4, Issue 2

Summer 2006

'07 contract team enlists member involvement Are you ready for some power?

By DEBORAH A.MILES

Is getting a raise important to you? Do you care about your health insurance? Are you concerned about job security?

If the answer is yes, now is the time to make sure your division members become involved in the '07 PS&T contract fight.

"Those of you who were involved in our last contract fight were instrumental in our success at the bargaining table," said PEF President-Elect Ken Brynien.

"With the onset of the 2007 PS&T contract negotiations, our bargaining team needs the full power of mobilization to succeed in obtaining the contract you want."

Brynien said now is the time to start recruiting new volunteers, making sure mobilization charts are updated, and ensuring the mobilization contact network is running smoothly and efficiently.

Another way to get your members involved is to encourage participation in the upcoming contract meetings that will be held throughout the state.

"These meetings give members an opportunity to express their concerns and tell us what issues the bargaining team should address,"

said Lou Matrazzo, PEF Vice President-Elect and contract team chair.

Mobilizers should check the PEF Web site at www.pef.org and click on the 2007 PS&T contract button, to find out when a meeting will take place in your area.

"Mobilization is a multi-faceted component," said Margaret Messer, PEF Director of Mobilization. "There are different levels in which people may be involved. Our mobilizer leaders need to seek out individuals for different roles."

Messer said some examples of member involvement are participating in a protest, calling elected leaders through the toll free hotline, hand billing a work location, writing a letter to the editor of your local newspaper, speaking with co-workers in other unions about fighting together, and getting signatures on a petition.

If you need assistance in refining your mobilization network, contact PEF's Mobilization Department to arrange for the latest training and motivational tips to get members involved. Call 1-800-342-4306 ext. 287, or send an e-mail to Mmesser@pef.org to schedule a mobilization workshop.



OGS becomes fully mobilized

By KIM LOCCISANO

Locating and charting the more than 700 members who work at the state Office of General Services (OGS) was not an easy task. But, it was a mobilization challenge and success for Division 179 council leader Joe Laviano and his team.

The effort was launched when PEF's mobilization department met several times with OGS members to discuss how to best complete the task of creating a mobilization network within this large, statewide division.

"We knew this was an important project for the division," said Greg McBride, assistant council leader who took the lead on the project. "It took some time and effort to create the network, but the ease with which we can now contact all of our members statewide makes it all worthwhile."

An OGS membership meeting was held on June 21 when Vice President Elect Lou Matrazzo and the PEF mobilization staff awarded the division their fully mobilized division plaque.

IN THIS ISSUE

2 Workplace Violence

3 Mandatory Overtime

4 Mobilization

New law, DVD inspire members to halt workplace violence

By **BLAIR BURROUGHS**

Since Gov. George Pataki signed the Workplace Violence Prevention bill into law in June, members in PEF Regions 10, 11 and 12 are organizing local health and safety committees.

Their goal is to deal with preventing workplace violence, as members are dedicated to making a meaningful difference in the quality of life for their coworkers.

For example, at the Pilgrim Psychiatric Center, Division 233 council leader Rosario (Rusty) Pascual organized a membership meeting to view the 'Stop Workplace Violence' DVD. Pascual said members were moved by the presentation and responded by volunteering to take the necessary steps to end violence in their facility.

Pascual also arranged a meeting with the Pilgrim facility director and members of the Civil Service Employees Association (CSEA). The meeting resulted in a unified effort to draft and implement plans at

Pilgrim to reduce workplace violence.

Members at the Bernard Fineson Developmental Disabilities Service Office in Queens welcomed the opportunity to have a workplace violence prevention presentation at their facility. Elizabeth Cheese, Division 207 council leader, also contacted PEF's mobilization department for a presentation. The viewing of the DVD inspired members to form a committee and plan a course of action.

The committee identified short-staffing as the key element that causes violent incidents to occur at Bernard Fineson. With the help of PEF Field Representative, Priscilla Marco, the committee devised a plan to direct the attention of managers and their co-workers on the dangers of out-of-title work, which covers short-staffing. By placing the issue of workplace violence on the local labor-management agenda, the division was successful in forming a

joint committee with managers. Their hope is for the joint committee to fulfill the statutory requirement under the Workplace Violence Prevention Act.

Acting on a desperate need of his members to confront the violence in his facility, Division 188 council leader James Stewart, Queens Children Psychiatric Center, placed a joint workplace violence committee on the division's local labor-management agenda.

Despite previous denials, managers are now receptive to the idea. Division 188's labor-management meeting was held the day before Gov. Pataki signed the Workplace Violence Prevention Act into law. While managers decide how they will work with the union and what their obligations are under the new law, the division is planning on moving forward and forming a committee to address the issues in their workplace.

Nurses rally to end mandatory overtime

By **NANCY WOLFF**

In May, the most comprehensive nurses rally took place on the Capitol steps when nurses from across the state rallied to demand an end to mandated overtime. For the past three years, nurses from four prominent nurses unions have coordinated their efforts to gain influence with state legislators.

With PEF taking the lead, the New York State United Teachers (NYSUT), the Service Employees International Union Local 1199 and the New York State Nurses Association demonstrated a strong, united front at the May 2 rally. The event drew dozens of lawmakers and hundreds of nurses who wore black

T-shirts that read, "Condition Critical, Save NY Nurses."

Labor leaders, nurses and lawmakers told the cheering crowd that staffing conditions have worsened because healthcare facilities have resorted to mandatory overtime. Nurses said this practice is dangerous for them and their patients, and that mandatory overtime creates a physical and mental strain. They also said they fear that excessive fatigue will cause them to make medical errors.

At the end of this legislative session, the Legislature again failed to pass the bill that would limit mandatory overtime.

Nurses provide riveting testimony to end mandatory overtime

By DEBORAH A. MILES

Just two weeks after hundreds of nurses rallied at the state Capitol to end mandatory overtime, PEF leaders and nurses kept the momentum alive by testifying before a joint hearing of the Assembly Standing Committees on Labor and Health on May 18 in Manhattan.

PEF President Roger Benson told the committee, chaired by Assembly members Susan John and Richard Gottfried, “as many as 98,000 hospital patients die annually in the United States as the result of medical errors, according to a report by the Institute of Medicine.”

“New York state accounts for an estimated 6,600 of these fatal errors,” Benson testified.

PEF nurse organizer Nancy Wolff read the testimony of Icilda Innocent, a community mental health nurse at Brooklyn Developmental Disabilities Services Office. Innocent was unable to attend. That testimony focused on working 24-hours straight.

“The emotional strain was crushing,” Wolff read. “There is a constant fear in your mind that you will forget something or make a mistake. You pray you don’t. You fear administering the wrong medication or dosage to a patient. Thank God there was no emergency that day.”

A nurse from the Capital District Psychiatric Center in Albany, Domenic Campanella, said, “When I worked in the crisis unit, 15 and 16-year-olds who were suicidal would be brought in. On more than one occasion, they were the children of colleagues. Their mothers were forced to put in so much overtime, they didn’t have the time to devote to their own children or realize their level of depression. It is so sad and unnecessary.”



SPEAKING OUT— Sandra Hammond, Jemma Hanson and PEF President Roger Benson listen to comments from lawmakers about mandatory overtime at a May Assembly hearing in Manhattan.

— Photo by Richard Dillard

Sandra Hammond, a nurse from the Stutzman Addiction Treatment Center in Buffalo, provided a moving moment in the testimony when her voice broke and she cried while talking about the worst short-staffing crisis in the history of that facility. It came up at the same time her father was diagnosed and being treated for cancer and her mother was wheelchair-bound.

Deborah Egel and Jemma Hanson, co-chairs of the PEF Nurses Committee, told lawmakers about the other states that have enacted laws or regulations about mandatory overtime, and how retention has become less of a problem.

“There are 69,000 nurses in the state of New York who are licensed and choose not to work in the profession,” Egel testified.

Assembly Member John asked if labor-management meetings have addressed the issues of staffing ratios and mandatory overtime.

“We instituted a committee to meet with the governor’s office,” Egel replied. “Rebecca Caudle (NY state chief negotiator for the PS&T unit) ran that committee. We sat down to talk about staffing ratios, mandatory overtime, recruitment and retention. She told us point blank, those are not issues she is willing to discuss at the table.”

“It has failed. That is why we rally every year to implore you to please help us,” Egel said.

“If there were some other problem that caused as many as 6,600 deaths per year, it would be on the front page of every newspaper in this state,” Benson said.

L-M conference offers savvy mobilization tips to move issues at the table

By **KIM LOCCISANO**

Ninety hands were raised when the participants of the 2006 Labor-Management conference were asked if managers ever denied their request at the table. Many of the PEF activists who attended the May conference in Albany went on to say managers repeatedly delayed giving the union a response, just flimsy excuses meeting after meeting.

Aware of this problem, PEF Vice President and Statewide L-M chair, Pat Baker, asked the PEF mobilization department to provide a workshop that would give the participants tools to create an internal and external organizing campaign around issues that have stalled, or have been rejected at the L-M table.

The workshop introduced the components of mobilization: organization, education and action as it affects the L-M forum. The workshop also emphasized the importance of organizing a workplace campaign before presenting the issue at the table.

"Mobilizing and educating the members behind an issue is important, as it sends a powerful message to managers," said Ron Vero, Executive Board Member representing Division 203,

Public Service.

The participants learned how to create their own campaigns around issues the facilitators suggested. Their campaigns were based on issues in different stages of the L-M process.

All issues were authentic L-M situations that PEF agencies have experienced.

Three hours later, each group compiled a campaign outlining issue selection, solution desired, coalition building, creation of a work plan, choosing tactics, and communicating with the membership. Although exhausted by the activity, most participants found it exciting to actually take an issue through the steps of creating a workplace campaign.

"It is important to determine how much the members are willing to do to work on the issues, and to make their work be a 'fun' activity. Think about different roles for different people and decide who can help in specific areas," Vero said.

Participants were enlightened, encouraged and eager to move their stalled issues at their next L-M meeting.

Division 392 council leader Carmela Triolo from the state Office of Mental Health, has been utilizing

the information she gained from the conference to help mobilize her division.

"Before you can represent people, you have to know who are the current and potential members, and where they are located in the workplace, and the PEF mobilization department is there to help you reach this goal," Triolo said.

"Managers don't always know more than labor representatives. There is a lot of expertise on how to navigate at the L-M table at PEF headquarters, plus the support of PEF field offices for divisions," she said. "All members should utilize these resources."

RESOURCES

■ Sign up to receive PEF's "Active Informed Member (AIM)" e-mail updates. Join the PEF ACTION CENTER by visiting www.pef.org and clicking on "Action Center."

■ Call the PEF Hotline, updated weekly, at 1-800-553-2445

If you need information or assistance with the mobilization process contact:

Margaret Messer, mmesser@pef.org or **Kim Loccisano**, kloccisano@pef.org, 1-800-342-4306, ext. 425; **Denise Young**, dyoung@pef.org, 1-800-724-5003, ext. 106; **Blair Burroughs**, bburroughs@pef.org, 1-800-522-8700, ext. 523

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

New York State
Public Employees
Federation, AFL-CIO
PO Box 12414
Albany, NY 12212-2414



Presorted
First-Class Mail
US Postage
PAID
Albany, NY
Permit #853