# Table of Contents

The Communicator

**The President’s Message**  
3

**Workplace violence endangers staff, cuts careers short, undercuts services**  
4

**PEF Executive Board**  
6

**Contract Update** - Progress on telecommuting and L/M process; wages and other financial issues on hold  
12

**Secretary-Treasurer’s Synopsis**  
13

**One PEF Executive Board seat filled, two special elections underway**  
14

**Federal Bill of Rights and Election Labor Management Reporting and Disclosure Act**  
15

**Proposed AFT/SEIU Call and Rules**  
16

**Letters to the Editor**  
19

**Want to change health plans for 2020? Do it before December 31**  
23

**Retirees in Action: What size pill $$ will you have to swallow in 2020?**  
24

**PEF members from multiple agencies assist with Halloween storm response**  
26

**OPWDD fire safety reps aid community following storms**  
29

**PEF retiree still serving New Yorkers, assists in the passage of a prescription drug recall notification bill**  
30

**Veterans luncheon raffle benefits Albany Housing Coalition**  
31

**Request civil service trainings, webinars from NYS Career Mobility Office**  
32

**Ailing members need your leave donations**  
34

**Saluting members on their retirements**  
35

**Photo Highlights**  
36

---

**Officers of PEF**

Wayne Spence President  
Kay Alison Wilkie Secretary-Treasurer  
Adriana Adams, Sharon DeSilva  
Randi DiAntonio, Vice Presidents  

**Regional Coordinators**

Michele Silsby Region 1  
Andrew Puleo, Region 2  
Colleen Williams, Region 3  
Roberta (Bobbi) Stafford, Region 4  
David Dubofsky, Region 5  
Jeanette St. Mary, Region 6  
Virginia (Gini) Davey, Region 7  
Michael Blue, Region 8  
Diane Jaulus, Region 9  
Darlene Williams, Region 10  
Bernadette O’Connor, Region 11  
Nora Higgins, Region 12

**Trustees**

Christopher Buman, Jeanette Santos, Maddle Shannon-Roberts

**PEF Regional Field Offices**

Region 1 Buffalo 1-800-462-1462  
Region 2 Elmira/Hornell 1-800-724-5001  
Region 3 Rochester 1-800-724-5003  
Region 4 Syracuse 1-800-724-5004  
Region 5 Binghamton 1-800-724-4998  
Region 6 Utica 1-800-724-5005  
Region 7 Potsdam 1-866-498-8532  
Region 8 Albany 1-800-342-4306  
Region 9 Poughkeepsie 1-800-548-4870  
Region 10 Manhattan/Bronx 1-800-522-8700  
Region 11 Brooklyn/Queens/Staten Island 1-866-897-9775  
Region 12 Long Island 1-800-832-5284

Advertising in this publication does not represent an endorsement by PEF or its members.

Members wishing to change their email/mailing address may call 800-342-4306, ext 221, or email Jawright@pef.org.

PEF is affiliated with the American Federation of Teachers, AFL-CIO and Services Employees International Union.
The President’s Message

By WAYNE SPENCE

Together we are UNION STRONG!

As we approach the end of 2019, I extend to you and your loved ones wishes for a happy, healthy and peaceful holiday season and I would like to thank you once again for the privilege and honor of serving you as the president of the Public Employees Federation.

The end of the year is a good time to look back on all we’ve accomplished together over the last 12 months, as well as a time to look forward to the new year to come.

We all know it hasn’t been an easy time for labor unions since the Janus Supreme Court decision, but I am happy to report that in spite of the attacks trying to silence the labor movement in the United States, the state of our union is STRONG! We are perhaps stronger than we’ve ever been.

You might ask how that can be. Well, the simple answer is: we were ready! Not only did we knock on doors, meet with members in their homes and on the job and have frank conversations about the value of unions and what it means to be a part of PEF, but we tightened our fiscal belts, making strategic changes that give us the power to make sure you, our members, receive the services you deserve such as:

- Negotiating a contract that provides members with the monetary, health benefits, retirement security, and respect we all deserve;
- Protecting our members’ safety and health in the workplace;
- Conducting legislative advocacy to make our members’ voices heard;
- Organizing in our workplaces; and
- Working with communities to improve the quality of life for all working families.

Our contract team has been hard at work negotiating a new contract that we can be proud to present to you, our membership. It is my intention to ensure we keep you informed on the talks by posting updates on the PEF website and social media pages and with video updates from the contract team after each negotiating session has concluded.

I want to thank you all for showing tremendous support for the contract team this year by participating in our Hashtag Fridays and Members in Black campaigns and especially at the Labor Day parades and events around the state. This is the kind of member participation that sends a message to the governor and his team that We Are Union Strong!

The time we spent building and strengthening relationships resulted in some really important wins for our members in the last legislative session.

Our Cost/Benefit Analysis bill passed in both the Assembly and the Senate and is currently on the governor’s desk for consideration. We ask that you take a moment to send a letter, email or make a call to the governor’s office to encourage him to sign this bill into law.

It’s important to remember that it’s not always about getting bills passed. Sometimes blocking a bill may be the best way to protect PEF members. That’s how we went about fighting the so-called “Less is More” bill – a bill that would have made it very difficult to enforce the rules of parole, making it nearly impossible for our parole officers to do their jobs. The proposal was bad for parole officers, bad for the people they supervise and bad for the communities that parole officers are sworn to protect. We intend to block this bill again, should it come before lawmakers during this year’s legislative session.

Over the summer, many of you participated in the incredibly successful MBP Family Fun Days. These events are a wonderful place for members who may not go to a worksite or membership meeting to learn about PEF and to get to know their PEF brothers and sisters and find out what it means to be part of the PEF family.

As we look ahead to 2020, let’s remember that you are our greatest strength. Unions are about members coming together to gain a strong voice in the workplace and the power to improve their lives. The PEF team is here to stand with you, to fight with you, and to provide the support, tools and resources you need to improve your life and the lives of your members.

Remember, you are not alone. Traveling around the state and meeting with members I feel a strong sense of unity that is growing and expanding across our union. I hope you feel it too, because it is because of you that we remain strong.

As we close out the year, I offer you my sincerest thanks for all you do every day on the job and in your communities, and I extend my best wishes to you and your loved ones for a very happy, healthy and successful New Year.
Workplace violence endangers staff, cuts careers short, undercuts services

By SHERRY HALBROOK

As more PEF members and retirees read or hear about the union’s call for the state to protect its employees from workplace violence, they are coming forward with their own stories of being assaulted and violence they face on the job. Some say they have been repeatedly assaulted, others say the level of danger and violence caused them to resign or retire early. The effects of these assaults leave lasting scars on the members’ psyches and careers that can continue long after the physical injuries and wounds heal or are at least stabilized. As if the risk of violent assault that can happen at any moment without warning isn’t bad enough, members tell PEF that too often managers have shown little or no support for them following a very violent attack, and are dismissive of the members’ suggestions for improving safety.

“As their union, PEF has been working in every way it can to curb this violence and to support our members’ efforts to be safe and those who are trying to heal and deal with the shock and pain that often follow these violent attacks,” said PEF President Wayne Spence. “But the ultimate duty and responsibility for keeping them safe lies with their employer. The state cannot duck this duty. Is it any wonder that its agencies have trouble recruiting and retaining professional, scientific and technical employees? If the state kept its employees safe and really focused on preventing violence, it could save taxpayers’ money that it is now spending on workers’ compensation claims, overtime, temps and per diems and even to repair or replace damaged property. That money could be spent to raise pay and improve recruitment and retention.”

Like a ‘war zone’

One example of the terribly violent and routinely dangerous conditions that some PEF members face on their jobs can be seen in the extreme physical damage to a state facility and its furnishings. The people who are ripping this place apart are mentally ill juveniles sent there to be stabilized before being discharged back into community-based care. Their maximum stay, which is usually funded by Medicaid, is 30 days. But one look at the total destruction of every wall and furnishing that isn’t bolted to the floor shows just how un-therapeutic this environment is, where the young patients are allowed to run wild.

Members told PEF that staff are afraid to interfere with this violence because they may be charged by the state Justice Center for the Protection of People with Special Needs with harming the child. For instance, if a client is attacking you and you raise your arms or use your hands to fend them off, and the attacker is accidentally scratched by a ring you are wearing, you may be charged with abusing the client. These youngsters learn quickly what they can say to get staff members into trouble.

Beating or kicking holes in the walls is one kind of expensive physical damage to property, but when the children crawl through those holes to enter a locked medications storage room to steal powerful meds, they greatly increase the danger to themselves and others.

Another factor here is a trendy new program at the state Office of Mental Health called the “Yes” program which trains staff members to avoid saying, “No,” to the children. As if all of that unbridled violence wasn’t stressful enough, the council leader said PEF members are reluctant to come to the PEF division’s office to ask questions or complain because of all the security cameras installed in that hallway.

“PEF members are afraid that management is watching to see who comes to our union office, and that managers may retaliate against them for just coming here,” the council leader said.
The Communicator — Page 5

No one benefits

“The state has created a ‘damned if you do and damned if you don’t’ situation here,” Spence said. “It’s a ‘Catch 22’ that makes them feel like they cannot possibly win and that it is dangerous just to ask for help.

“This situation isn’t benefitting anyone. Our members are being injured and feel their careers as professionals are in constant jeopardy,” Spence said. “Tax dollars are being needlessly wasted, and worst of all this is not a therapeutic environment that helps children stabilize and heal. I’m told that typically a half dozen or so of the children are involved in the wild and uncontrolled destructive rampages, and that is not healthy for them. It can’t be a healing environment for the others who need calm and a sense of security and peace to deal with their issues and recover. No one wins here and everyone is losing!”

Retire to escape

That’s just one state workplace. What about PEF members who work elsewhere?

Nancy Cook was a psychiatric nurse and PEF member who worked at Mohawk Valley Psychiatric Center in Utica and at Hutchings PC in Syracuse during her state career. That career ended when she retired from SUNY Upstate Medical Center in Syracuse.

“I was punched in both shoulders during two separate incidents and in the face in another incident,” Cook recalled. “The left shoulder punch prompted me to retire earlier than planned. I needed extensive rotator cuff surgery for a complete tear in the rotator cuff and labrum, with tendons ripped off the bone. The patient didn’t cause these serious injuries, but may have exacerbated the condition.

“The worst incident occurred after I medicated a patient who didn’t want it,” Cook said. “Three security officers and the only male staff member (the patient’s RN) on the unit, struggled holding the patient down, so I offered to give the injection. After security left the unit, I returned to the nurses’ station. Ten minutes later the patient quietly entered the nurses’ station and wrapped his hands around my neck. I tried to run. Our male staff member happened to walk in at that time and jumped on the patient’s back. He and the patient ended up falling forward and knocking me to the floor with them on top of me! I struggled to get free, but the patient had a firm grip on my ankle and was trying to bite me. He was HIV+!

“Finally, I kicked his hand, which loosened his grip and I got free. I ran out the door and locked myself in the bathroom,” Cook said. “With all the commotion, we had worked our way from the nurses’ station, through the Med room and into the employee lounge. The patient spotted a bottle of bleach and began throwing bleach at staff. Mind you, all staff working that evening were women in their 60s and the male staff member was also that age.”

No support

The terrifying incident left more than just physical damage to her body. Cook said, “I suffered PTSD (post traumatic stress disorder) as a result of this incident for several months, but I did not seek treatment. I forced myself to return to work the next day, otherwise I feared I would never go back!”

Adding insult to injury, Cook said, “My supervisors did not support me after the choking incident. They called a meeting the next day and asked what we could have done differently to prevent the occurrence. Staff asked if we could lock the door to the nurses’ station, but we were denied.

Try to keep going

“I never lost any work time for these incidents,” Cook said. “I returned to work the next day, although I didn’t want to. I was definitely traumatized!”

That feeling of a need to “soldier on” is common among PEF members who say they feel they must go back to work as quickly as possible because they don’t want to risk being too afraid to return, or because they feel guilty about not working their shifts and worrying that their co-workers will be mandated to work even more overtime to fill in those gaps. Cook said that was also a concern of hers.

“I would also like to mention staffing levels,” Cook added. “When I retired, staffing was at its lowest levels. I understand today it is far worse. Staffing levels must be increased. If management finds that it’s ‘not in the budget,’ I recommend assigning ‘top-heavy’ management RNs to work the units. That will end having them sit around chatting while the few nurses assigned to the unit run around like chickens with their heads cut off! Increase staffing levels NOW!”

| Image 317x29 to 557x312 |
The PEF Executive Board met November 7 and 8 in Latham, voting on annual convention locations, discussing member engagement, acting on budget amendments, proposing policy to guide Division scholarships, and getting reports from PEF’s recent audit and the Secretary-Treasurer, among other business.

**Workplace violence**

The striking cover of the November issue of the PEF Communicator set the stage for discussion at the Eboard meeting — the issue of workplace violence and the need to address it across the board.

In the course of recent weeks, eight PEF members, many of them nurses and parole officers, were assaulted on the job.

“What good is a contract if you go to work and you don’t come home? Or you come home permanently disfigured?” PEF President Wayne Spence said. “This cannot be the norm for our members.”

Eboard member Ralph Mabb, Department of Motor Vehicles, said the issue is widespread. “As a union, we need to start taking a look at this,” he said. “The tenor has changed how the public treats civil servants. This is an epidemic.”

Contract Chair and Region 10 Coordinator Darlene Williams urged members to share the November Communicator article across social media. “Use social media. Share this or this will be a silo within PEF,” she said.

“You go to work every day and sometimes you’re on a battlefield,” Region 11 Coordinator Bernadette O’Connor said.

PEF members who have knowledge of workplace violence incidence should contact Director of Communications Jane Briggs, jbriggs@pef.org.

“How do we move the issue?” Spence asked. “Cuts to staff are resulting in unsafe situations. We have to look to legislation.”

**Contract update, strategies going forward**

A video featuring the convention delegates walking to Empire State Plaza and participating in a “unity photo” on the plaza steps was shown to the executive board members.

“How many of you have shared the video?” asked Williams. “How many of you have the unity photo hanging at your workstation?” Hands went up around the room. “The day you walked, that is the feeling you need to keep having,” Williams said. “We’re in a two-handed fight. After the unity walk on the plaza, the State came back with some counter proposals. We need to keep up the pressure.”

The contract team has developed a strategic plan and asked for the board’s help. “You are our 12th players on the field,” Williams said.

Twitter has become a big part of the team’s strategy. Williams related how she saw a story on Twitter of fire protection specialists responding to catastrophic flooding. “They are PEF members,” she said. “They saved a child from a flooded out house.” But on Twitter, the governor said: “Thank God.”

“I don’t have a problem with thanking God,” Williams said. “But how do you not thank the PEF members doing the actual rescuing?” Williams said as much in a Tweet to the governor’s account. And, it made a difference. “They changed the Tweet to thank the rescuers,” she said.

At an event she attended with Bronx Borough President Ruben Diaz Jr., Williams mentioned to him that he wasn’t following PEF. “Now they are,” she said. “Go to the politicians, tell them they need to recognize that we need a fair contract. We deserve a fair contract.”

In addition to Twitter and Facebook, the contract team is also urging PEF members to send letters to local newspapers. “Start to tell the local newspapers what you do,” Williams said. “We need to start bargaining differently.”

A template of a generic letter that members can personalize is available on the PEF website.

The contract team also filmed a video update to share with members the items they are focused on addressing at the bargaining table. “Feed that information to the members and keep the members engaged,” Williams said. “Show them the video on your phone. It will talk about what we’re doing.”
Spence said unions that recently finalized contracts had been in negotiations for two, three, or more years. “All those unions got 2 percent and a 20 percent increase in copays and other givebacks,” he said. PEF has been in negotiations for six months.

PEF upped its game with its Hashtag Fridays campaign, as well, creating new signs that let New Yorkers know all the different work members do. “Every Friday, send in pictures with these new signs,” Williams said. “We want to make sure that the governor sees all that we do. He needs to see that we do this work.”

The PEF DOES IT signs are available for download from the PEF website. Members can also create their own wording on a blank sign. Signs include patient care, protecting workers, advancing scientific breakthroughs, keeping your roads and bridges safe, protecting your water and air supply, keeping your data safe, community based care, and many more.

**Convention locations**

With an eye toward fiscal responsibility, site logistics, and honoring the whole of New York state, the PEF Executive Board voted to set annual convention locations at its November quarterly meeting.

At its last meeting, the board had selected Saratoga as the 2020 location. PEF Director of Special Events Kim Partridge began preparations for planning and quickly realized there would be major problems with this location in 2020.

“We learned there was major construction with parking,” President Spence told the board. “I convened a meeting last week with the Convention Committee Chair, Vice President Sharon V. DeSilva, and the Convention Committee to discuss our options.”

Spence said it was necessary to make a decision quickly, since contracts and planning need to be set far in advance. “Based on major problems at Saratoga, we would like to recommend moving the 2020 convention to Niagara Falls.”

In an apportionment year, Spence said, expectations are that more delegates will participate and more breakout rooms would be needed for meetings. “If we had waited, Niagara Falls would potentially not have space for us,” Spence said.

“There were pretty serious concerns regarding Saratoga,” said Partridge. “We needed 11 hotels in Saratoga. The most we’ve had before is seven. We were notified a parking garage is being constructed on what is currently the High Rock Ave parking lot. Construction would be starting in October, while we would be there.”

Things continued to sour for the Saratoga option as Partridge delved deeper into planning. “The 2020-21 dates available were over the Columbus Day weekend,” she said, adding the only other option was September 12 to 15, which is very early for convention.

Shuttle buses would be hard-pressed to navigate the city, both due to the construction and to Saratoga’s generally narrow streets.

“It was really not a good idea for an apportionment year,” Partridge said. “I have nothing against Saratoga, it’s a beautiful location. It’s just not appropriate for an apportionment year with the construction and the hotel locations.

“We went with Niagara Falls as the recommendation because we fit there,” Partridge said. “We know we fit. We know there will be higher attendance and significant breakout room needs.”

No contract had been signed for Saratoga, Spence said, and switching locations will not cost PEF any money.

The 2014 PEF Convention was held in Niagara Falls. Partridge said a number of hotels have undergone renovations and upgrades since. “Three of five hotels are new as of 2018,” Partridge said.

Spence said there would be planned free time to give delegates a chance to enjoy what Niagara Falls has to offer. “There is so much to do, I get it,” he said.

Following the discussion, a motion was made to go to Niagara Falls in 2020 and 2021, to Buffalo in 2022, and to Saratoga in 2023, in hopes the construction issues would be off the table in Saratoga by the time the convention rolled around.

Another amendment was made to drop consideration for 2023 and vote only on 2021 and 2022. This carried and the final motion carried as amended, setting the locations to Niagara Falls in 2020 and 2021 and Buffalo in 2022, with 2023 to be determined at a later date.

**Member engagement**

“Why member engagement and why now?” asked PEF Vice President Randi DiAntonio. “Because we need active and informed members to get a good contract! We’re doing well but we’re still not where we need to be.”
DiAntonio and PEF Associate Director of Field Organizing Dan Carpenter said PEF needs to work on capturing those members that come into the PS&T unit but who have not joined PEF.

DiAntonio said there is no fingerpointing at any division or region. “Membership engagement is a job for all of us,” she said. “We’re honing in on locations we see trends.”

Access reasons may be one wall to new member engagement. “We need a plan moving forward,” DiAntonio said. “It’s not one-size-fits-all. We need you guys to be part of the team. This is our union.”

To get to the members PEF hasn’t engaged, beginning November 1 all regional coordinators are being provided with a list of new members of the unit who haven’t joined PEF. “Our hope is that they will go back over two weeks and try to reach these members,” Carpenter said. “After that, the field reps will check in. We want to take an all-in approach to reach these members.”

DiAntonio stressed the need for solidarity and union presence at all divisions. “We need to build a union culture in every worksite,” she said. “Not only the stewards getting involved. We need to build power from the ground up.”

Following Janus, despite fears PEF would lose the former fee payers, PEF gained members, Secretary-Treasurer Kay Alison Wilkie said. “Many fee payers, when they weighed the benefits, decided to join the union,” she said. “The risk now, as more people come on board, is that we must ensure they become PEF members!”

The situation isn’t currently too dire, Spence said, but it could grow. “We are not bad, but I don’t want to get too comfortable,” he said. “There is room for improvement. We all want the union as a whole to succeed.”

“We are currently doing everything in our power to improve our systems,” Wilkie said. “The Eboard members will be getting the regional coordinators’ information, too. We need consistent data in a consistent format. We’re working overtime to get this done.”

Region 3 Coordinator Colleen Williams said not all union leaders are getting the time they are due and it hinders their ability to conduct union business, like new member engagement.

“People are wearing many hats,” Williams said. “We’re very overburdened. The governor and GOER are not allowing every steward the access time guaranteed under changes to the Taylor Law.”

By law, PEF is guaranteed access to new hires. “We are required by law to get notification within 30 days of a new hire,” Carpenter said. “We are guaranteed access by the Taylor Law. Even if the agency does orientation online, we have access to that member and we will use that access.”

VP DeSilva stressed the importance of building union strength. “Brothers and sisters, the anti-union attackers want to see us fail,” she said. “But we are not going anywhere. It is time to stand together and fight. It is time to put on some comfortable sneakers and sweatpants and stand together strong, because this is not a battle, it is a war, and we will win!”

“Don’t just wear your Union Strong buttons or place the magnets on the back of your vehicles,” she said. “This war is not just about PEF, it is a fight to keep the labor movement throughout this country strong. If you’re not getting access to your newly hired members pursuant to the terms of the Alphonso David memo, then please place it as an agenda item on your labor/management agenda. We must memorialize our concerns in writing.”

Region 12 Coordinator Nora Higgins said there are sometimes forces working against the union on a worksite, actively talking down the union or management telling new hires not to join the union.

“Tell us if that’s happening,” Spence said.

“That’s ripe for the L/M table,” DeSilva said. “A supervisor cannot be allowed to take that type of action.”

“We’ll work through any hurdles you’re experiencing,” DiAntonio added.

The downward trend in membership also cropped up during the Secretary-Treasurer’s report. “We have dipped below 52,000 members,” Wilkie said. “I’m not happy with that. We budgeted for 2019-2020 based on 51,828 members. We were at 51,858 as of the end of September.”

She echoed earlier sentiments. “This is a shared responsibility for all of us,” she said. “We are in a new world. We have to engage continuously in enrollment. If the trend continues over time, it will mean constraints to costs.”

**Bonadio audits PEF**

Thomas Gianatasio, a partner at The Bonadio Group, reported on the group’s audit of PEF’s accounting and finances.

“Your organization did a nice job of preparing all the information on a timely basis,” Gianatasio told the Eboard. “It ran very smoothly. We encountered no significant difficulties and had no disagreements with management. There were no uncorrected misstatements.”

Bonadio does not analyze every transaction of an organization, he said. “We perform risk assessments,” he said.
As far as PEF’s financial statements: “We believe these are materially correct,” Gianatasio reported.

Recommendations to button up division purchase card use, internal controls over cash disbursements and cash receipts, and information technology improvements were noted and PEF is working hard on all these areas.

Questions from the floor asked why PEF Retirees and Membership Benefits finances were not included in this audit. The secretary-treasurer explained that they are separate entities and are not consolidated with PEF.

Another Eboard representative asked if the planned IT upgrades at PEF were in-line with the recommendations.

“We paid a lot of attention to the comments from last year,” Wilkie said. “We’ve worked with a consultant to improve our cybersecurity.”

Gianatasio agreed there have been strides made. “The organization has made significant efforts to improve IT security,” he said.

The full audit report can be found in the October Communicator and was also distributed to all Eboard members.

Secretary-Treasurer’s report

Work has begun at PEF Headquarters in Latham, with roof renovations underway and HVAC systems, new windows, and interior remodels to come, Secretary-Treasurer Wilkie said during her Secretary-Treasurer’s report.

IT infrastructure upgrades are also in progress. “We have new servers and new equipment,” Wilkie said. “A lot has already been installed at Membership Benefits.”

Included in the IT upgrade will be an overhaul of the PEF website. “The website is the thing that touches members most immediately,” Wilkie said.

“Where do we stand?” Wilkie continued. “We have a surplus of over $900,000, but really that number will be lower due to convention bills that remain to be paid. We’re largely on track with expenses.”

As of September 30, total assets were $22,846,355, Wilkie reported. The current report did not reflect the USW staff contract but “we made provisions for the staff contract,” she said.

PEF has $281,308 left out of $547,000 for contingency funded campaigns, Wilkie reported. The funds so far have supported Go Public 2.0, fighting closure of Hutchings Psychiatric Center, and health care professionals campaigns.

Divisions are in good shape, as well. As an example, she broke down the numbers for divisions 382 to 513. “We have 52 percent in good standing, 13 percent improving, and 35 percent not in good standing as of October 16,” Wilkie said. The slightly higher percentage of NGS reflects some delays in receiving audits due, Wilkie said.

Some divisions are over their max allotments as of September 30, Wilkie reported. “Some divisions haven’t yet spent down sufficiently on activities for their members,” Wilkie said. “We expect they will catch up with expenses for upcoming holiday parties.”

Wilkie also asked the board to approve a budget amendment to the temporary hire line.

The amendment would decrease the employee benefits expense line, which was budgeted amply and expenses have come in far lower than anticipated, and increase the temporary hire line by $115,000, from $17,500 to $150,000, she said.

Shifting the money “won’t be felt,” Wilkie said. The budget amendment is a result of additional hires required by staff turnover, unanticipated illnesses and absences.

Division scholarship policy guidance

Without a doubt, offering students in members’ families a chance at money for schooling is a key part of membership engagement and a tangible example of the value of the union.

But, up until now, divisions have managed the process in a variety of ways, with no policy in place to guide them.

“We have been grappling with confusion in a number of divisions around scholarships,” Wilkie said. “We’ve decided to provide guidance and make sure divisions follow appropriate budgeting.”
The policy presented to the board included language that would require scholarship applications and materials be completed and submitted for review to PEF Divisions Finance along with the divisions’ annual budgets on April 30.

It also stresses clearly announcing scholarship opportunities to all members in the division during the spring and summer, via eblast, bulletin boards and the PEF Communicator; and it states announcement of winners should be made in the fall or winter by both the division and in the Communicator.

Wilkie said there have been applications in the past that did not comply with PEF standards, not conforming to equal opportunity guidelines and sometimes being steered toward certain people and away from others.

“We have had no tools to address this,” Wilkie said.

The Eboard approved the policy, with amendments to remove date references.

**Chicago office update**

President Spence said a meeting took place between PEF and the commissioner of the Department of Taxation and Finance concerning the plans to close the Chicago office, where PEF has a number of members.

“They rejected the plan the Chicago members put together,” Spence said. “Despite the plan showing that they would save money.”

Members in Chicago had proposed “hoteling” at the office. “If you’re an auditor or a field person, you may not be in the office most of the time,” Spence said. “They proposed rotating spaces between people. We showed them the costs of reducing the footprint versus travel.

“They told us, ‘It’s not about the money,’” Spence said. “It’s unfortunate.”

PEF fought the closure of SUNY Downstate and the Western New York Children’s Psychiatric Center, Spence said. “We showed them the tenacity of PEF,” he said. “It’s going to be uncomfortable for them [Tax and Finance]. We sent our information to the comptroller and his staff is looking at it.

“My commitment to our members: if the comptroller says we have a strong position, it will be a fight,” Spence said. He promised to go personally to speak with PEF members in Chicago.

**Delegate Elections Committee reports out**

Tom Comanzo, chair of the PEF Delegate Election Committee, outlined dates and deadlines for the 2020 convention. Petitions will be available March 18, 2020 and will be due April 8, 2020; ballots will be mailed April 24, 2020 and will be due back May 15, 2020; and the count will be May 20, 2020.

Postcards and emails will go out with information and dates, Comanzo said.

Eboard member Mike Singleton, seat 225, Department of Labor, brought forward a member item after one of his constituents was unable to secure enough votes to attend the 2019 convention despite wanting to attend.

“My member was not allowed to attend the 2019 convention as one of the two delegates because she did not receive enough votes,” Singleton’s item stated. “The reason being, Region 2 is combined with Region 3, which has a much larger constituency, for the purpose of delegate seating.”

He proposed amending the constitutional requirement of regions being combined for delegate seating to “ensure that those who wish to attend should be able to.”

A constitutional amendment would need to be acted upon at the 2020 convention.

“I make this proposal not only to broaden representation for my agency, but also to give more members the experience of convention,” Singleton said.

Region 2 Coordinator Andrew Puleo supported the member item, saying Singleton has been working hard to make his division stronger.

The board voted in favor of the item.

**Grievance tracking**

On day two of Eboard, Puleo asked for an update on the status of the grievance tracking system.

“Staff had concerns, so I directed the three field directors to work with legal and contract administration to work out the kinks,” Spence said.

Proposed changes to satisfy the staff concerns could cost an additional $8,000 to $12,000, he reported. “I’m prepared to spend that,” Spence said. “I want another sit-down with everybody to discuss changes one last time.”
January 1, 2020 remains the hard deadline.

**Internal auditor position debated**

A motion was made to eliminate the currently vacant PEF staff position of internal auditor.

“Traditionally we never had this position,” Eboard member Kevin Jones said. “I think the issues have been addressed and this is duplicative of the accounting department.”

The position was created after an instance of fraudulent spending on the part of a former council leader.

“Sixty thousand dollars in fraudulent spending was framed as an accounting error,” Spence said. “There was no way to review. I believe that you need checks and balances.”

Wilkie said changes had been made to internal procedures since that incident. “I think major improvements were made,” she said. “But it is helpful to have oversight by an internal auditor. It’s helpful to have that quality assurance role.”

Eboard member Joe Donahue opposed removing the position. “The position was created for a reason,” he said. “We need to hold people accountable and be proactive as opposed to reactive.”

The motion to eliminate the position was defeated.

**Training for employment discrimination cases**

Eboard representative Ade Oluwo said the “biggest threats facing our members are discipline, discrimination, civil service and promotional opportunities, privatization, and title modernization.”

He brought a member item to the floor proposing to hire Eric Josey of Public Service Premier Consulting Inc. to conduct trainings for field representatives on employment discrimination.

“Currently there is no opportunity in PEF to train PEF field representatives on employment discrimination cases and help our members when it comes to protecting our members jobs and discrimination lawsuits (OMIG, Stony Brook University Hospital),” Oluwo’s proposal stated.

President Spence said it would be best to send out a request for proposals for a consultant to train staff. He directed the Affirmative Action Committee to work with the Secretary-Treasurer’s Office on the RFP and that work is underway. In the meantime, Spence agreed to bring in Eric Josey for training at OMIG and some other impacted agencies on how to write human rights complaints for urgent concerns.
The PEF Contract Team made headway on telecommuting and discussed improvements to the Labor Management committee process during negotiations with the Governor’s Office of Employee Relations.

“After much deliberation, we were able to make significant progress on telecommuting,” said Contract Team Chair Darlene Williams. “We also had a productive discussion about improving the Labor Management committee process. PEF and the state have a shared goal of making this vital process more effective for the benefit of all.”

Also on the bargaining table in November: out-of-title work, travel, parking, time and attendance, and Article 30. Under Article 30, a manager can require an employee who has already provided a doctor’s statement clearing them to return to work to submit to a second exam with a state appointed doctor (EHS) before they are permitted to return.

“It can take weeks or months to get an appointment with EHS,” Williams said. “Our members are required to use up to 20 days of their own accruals while awaiting the EHS exam. These accruals are not restored if and when EHS clears them to return to work, which is what happens in a vast majority of cases.”

The Contract Team is standing firm on the issue and believes members and their families should not suffer this loss because of state-required second opinions.

“It is an unbearable hardship for those members who have little or no accruals,” Williams said. “Those employees are forced to go on leave without pay for up to 20 working days. That would mean an entire month with zero pay to care for themselves and their families.”

The state does not want to discuss financial issues.

“The state is insistent that PEF agree to 2 percent raises along with increases in healthcare copays and premiums,” Williams said. “The combination of these two proposals, along with the ever-rising cost of living, could actually result in a net loss for our members.

“Our members deserve better,” Williams continued. “We are working hard to bring back a contract that honors your service. Your concerns are being voiced at the table and, with your support, we will continue the fight.”

Strategizing and drafting contract language is ongoing for negotiations scheduled for the week of December 9. The Contract Team needs the backing of PEF’s full membership as bargaining continues.

“Stay informed, stay involved, and let your friends and neighbors know what you do for New York state,” Williams urged. “Let them know how proud you are of your contributions and that PEF deserves a fair contract. Having the support of our more than 52,000 members makes us stronger and more effective at the bargaining table.”

PEF launched its #PEFDOESIT campaign at the November Executive Board meeting. The Contract Team is also urging members to send letters to their local newspaper and get the word out on who PEF members are and what they do for the people of New York.

“Please keep up the good work of writing your legislators and posting the services you provide to New York state to Facebook and Twitter, with the hashtag #PEFDOESIT,” Williams said. “We are continuing to promote awareness of the issues and obstacles we face as New York state professionals.”
Inspired by 2019 progress, ready to take on 2020 challenges

By KAY ALISON WILKIE

As 2019 draws to a close and holidays with loved ones beckon, it seems fitting for us to reflect back on the recent past as we celebrate our transcendent union values and victories. Here are some notable moments and developments I found inspiring about being your PEF secretary-treasurer in 2019:

• Witnessing the bravery of so many stalwart PEF members, serving communities and clients in the face of workplace threats, violence and bullies while tirelessly advocating for safe staffing and healthy working conditions;

• Striding strong to advance PEF’s powerful visibility during a stellar 2019 Convention ‘Solidarity Stroll’ -- making the case for a respectful and fair contract, in full view of the state Capitol, with many hundreds joining a beautiful photo op at the Empire State Plaza!

• Participating in a march to the Alabama State Capitol during the October AFT (American Federation of Teachers) Civil, Human and Women’s Rights Conference in Montgomery, and reflecting on how very much more work remains to be done 50 years after the launch of the civil rights movement, # ShowUp4Justice;

• Seeing increasing numbers of dynamic, PEF elected leaders in divisions and regions, meaningfully engaging with members, with great financial management;

• Getting long overdue and much needed IT infrastructure and capital improvements underway at PEF Albany headquarters: starting with a new roof, new computer servers and improved security, with much more to follow; and

• Sharing improved financial results with PEF leaders at convention and Executive Board meetings, including surpluses that fuel PEF’s strategic goals, and effective, ethical and honest policies that bolster our union’s survival.

In the New Year to come, we must redouble our commitment to building our UNION POWER, as we are sure to continue to face daunting challenges. Greedy and malevolent anti-union forces, eager to litigate unions out of existence, continue to attempt to sow division in our ranks, and to diminish our membership numbers. The latest attacks involve massive newspaper ads, and targeted letters soliciting members to drop union membership.

We cannot let them gain ground. WE MUST RISE UP to WIN OUR FUTURE!

Membership numbers represent the power and lifeblood of our union movement. It is our shared responsibility to sustain and grow our union, member-by-member, conversation-by-conversation, and meeting-by-meeting to achieve meaningful results for our members, families and communities.

Looking forward to 2020, may we all resolve to contribute to strategic union-movement success and values with brilliant teamwork among PEF leaders, members and staff, securing a just and fair contract, significantly improved working conditions and greater union power!
One PEF Executive Board seat filled, two special elections underway

By SHERRY HALBROOK

One vacant seat on the PEF Executive Board was filled during the third-quarterly special elections to fill mid-term vacancies, and balloting is underway to determine who will two other mid-term vacancies on the board.

As the sole certified candidate for Seat 460, James Reppert was elected to represent PEF members working for the state Department of State.

Following the submission of nominating petitions, two candidates, Engels Rojas and Debra A. Vercruysse, were certified for election to fill Seat 174, which represents certain members at the state Office of Information Technology Services, and two candidates, Pennie Grinnell and David Takor, were certified for election to Seat 435, which represents certain members at the state Office of Children and Family Services. Ballots will be mailed to these constituencies November 20. They must be returned by December 12 for counting by the American Arbitration Association December 13.

The new board members will serve the remainder of three-year terms that expire July 31, 2021.

No candidates were certified following petitioning for Board Seat 545, which represents members working in the following political subdivisions of New York state: Albany Housing Authority; Albany County Probation; and Allegany County. Nominees will again be sought to fill Seat 545 in the 2020 first-quarter special elections that begin in January.

In addition, Seat 85 has become vacant and will be part of the 2020 first-quarter special elections. Nominating petitions for the first-quarter elections will be available starting January 8, and must be returned by January 30. If only one candidate is certified to fill a vacant seat, that candidate will be seated. If more than one candidate is certified to fill the seat, ballots will be mailed February 21 to constituents of that seat and must be returned to the American Arbitration Association by March 13 for counting March 16.
Federal Bill of Rights and Election Labor Management Reporting and Disclosure Act

Title I – Bill of Rights of Union Members

- Union members have equal rights to nominate candidates for union office, vote in union elections, and participate in union meetings. They may also meet with other members and express any opinions.

- Unions may impose assessments and raise dues only by democratic procedures.

- Unions must afford members a full and fair hearing of charges against them.

- Unions must inform their members about the provisions of the Labor Management Reporting and Disclosure Act (LMRDA).

- Members may enforce Title I rights through a private suit against the union, but may be required to exhaust internal union remedies for up to four months before filing suit.

- Union members and nonunion employees may receive and inspect collective-bargaining agreements. This right may be enforced by the individual or by the U.S. secretary of labor.

Title IV – Elections

- Local unions must elect their officers by secret ballot; international union and intermediate bodies must elect their officers by secret ballot vote of the members or by delegates chosen by secret ballot.

- International unions must hold elections at least every five years, intermediate bodies every four years, and local unions every three years.

- Unions must comply with a candidate’s request to distribute campaign material to members at the candidate’s own expense and must also refrain from discriminating against any candidate with respect to the use of membership lists. Candidates have the right to inspect a list containing the names and addresses of members subject to a union security agreement within 30 days prior to the election.

- A member in good standing has the right to nominate candidates, to be a candidate subject to reasonable qualifications uniformly imposed, to hold office, and to support and vote for the candidates of the member’s choice.

- Unions must mail a notice of election to every member at the member’s last known home address at least 15 days prior to the election.

- A member whose dues have been withheld by an employer may not be declared ineligible to vote or to be a candidate for office by reason of alleged delay or default in the payment of dues.

- Unions must conduct regular elections of officers in accordance with their constitution and bylaws and preserve all election records for one year.

- Union and employer funds may not be used to promote the candidacy of any candidate. Union funds may be utilized for expenses necessary for the conduct of an election.

- Union members may hold a secret ballot vote to remove from office an elected local union official guilty of serious misconduct if the secretary of labor finds the union constitution and bylaws do not provide adequate procedures for such a removal.

- Union members who have exhausted internal union election remedies or who have invoked such remedies without obtaining a final decision within three calendar months after their invocation may file a complaint with the secretary within one calendar month thereafter.

- The secretary of labor has authority to file suit in a federal district court to set aside an invalid election and to request the court to order a new election under the supervision of the secretary and in accordance with Title IV.
Proposed AFT/SEIU Call and Rules
American Federation of Teachers and Service Employees International Union Conventions
For AFT and SEIU conventions the following rules apply:

1. In order to be nominated, a dues-paying member must obtain the signatures of fifty (50) other members from within the designated title groupings for this convention (see listings).

2. A nominee may not sign his/her own petition.

3. A member may sign only one (1) nominating petition.

4. The accuracy of the information contained in the petition is the responsibility of the person filing the petition.

5. Nominating forms will be available to be picked up at all Local PEF Offices on January 8, 2020 at 9:00 AM. Petitions will also be posted by 9:00 AM on January 8, 2020 at www.pef.org/elections. Faxing is not allowed. All petitions must be returned either by hand delivery to your local PEF Office or by United States mail as follows:

   Hand delivered: Petitions will be accepted at the Local PEF Office or PEF Headquarters during regular business hours 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM Monday through Friday. The deliverer will receive a receipt that is signed, date and time stamped. Petitions are due by 5:00 PM on January 30, 2020.

   — OR —

   Mailed: Original petitions must be returned to PEF-Albany Headquarters c/o Divisions Department at PO Box 12414, Albany, NY 12212-2414 no later than 5:00 PM on January 30, 2020.

6. Petitions may be returned by certified mail (return receipt requested), although this is not required. Certified mail sometimes takes longer than regular mail. Postal failures or inadequacies are a matter between the mailer and the post office, not the Elections Committee. Allow five (5) days or more for mailing to be safe. PEF sends each nominee a notice of receipt.

7. Per the PEF Constitution and Executive Board policy, the five (5) statewide officers are automatic delegates to the AFT and SEIU Conventions.

8. In addition to the statewide officers, a minimum of ten (10) elected delegates will comprise the PEF delegation to the convention for AFT’s and twenty (20) for SEIU’s.

9. (a) If ten (10) or fewer valid nominating petitions are received, those individuals who submitted a valid petition will be deemed duly elected for AFT.

   (b) If twenty (20) or fewer valid nominating petitions are received, those individuals who submitted a valid petition will be deemed duly elected for SEIU.

10. The Secretary-Treasurer will provide the Delegate Election Committee with the estimated cost of sending one delegate to the forthcoming AFT and SEIU Conventions. In addition, the Secretary-Treasurer will provide the committee with a cost estimate for holding an election. The committee will determine the breakdown of the total number of delegates that could attend the convention, compared with the cost of holding an election. This will be determined by dividing the cost of holding an election by the cost of sending one delegate to the convention. If the total number of valid petitions received is equal to or fewer than the break-even number, all eligible members who submitted valid petitions up to our maximum number of delegates allotted will be deemed duly elected. This will be based on petition date/time received order up to the maximum number of delegates allotted. Those members that have submitted valid petitions over the maximum number of delegates allotted will be considered alternates in the date/time order of petition(s) received.

11. If the number of valid petitions received is greater than the break-even total (see #10), an election will be held. Alternates will fill the delegate openings by rank order of the number of votes received in the election. Ties will be broken by random drawing.

   – No EOL (Employee Organization Leave) will be provided for delegates attending the AFT/SEIU Conventions.

   – Travel and lodging will be arranged and provided by PEF.

   – A per-diem allowance for meals will be provided by PEF.
AFT Convention
Site: Houston, TX
Dates: July 27 – 30, 2020
PEF title groups eligible to attend the AFT convention:
A, B, C, D, F, Q and S.

SEIU Convention
Site: Chicago, IL
Dates: April 24 – 27, 2020
PEF title groups eligible to attend the SEIU convention: E, G, H, J, K, M, N, O, P and R.

Dates To Remember
A. Nominating petitions will be available at all PEF offices for potential candidates to pick up during regular office hours starting 9 a.m. – January 8, 2020 and are due back by 5 p.m. – January 30, 2020.

B. Elections (if needed) will begin with ballots being mailed by February 7, 2020 with a return date of 5 p.m. March 2, 2020.

AFT PEF job-title groupings
A. Nurses and related nursing titles.

B. Engineers, right-of-way agents, designers, architects, drafting and related engineering technicians, pilots and conservation titles.

C. Teachers, librarians, trainers and related educational titles.

D. Doctors, dentists, psychiatrists, psychologists, dieticians, veterinarians, pharmacists, health-care, home-economists and related medical researchers.

F, Q, S. Chaplains, scientists, cultural affairs specialists, related artists and sciences professionals, management personnel and related administration specialists, planners and supervisors.

SEIU PEF job-title groupings
E. Social workers and social services.

G. Attorneys, referees, hearing officers, hearing examiners, mediators and judges.

H. Therapists, rehabilitators.

J. Parole officers, drug abuse counselors, and related law enforcement professionals.

K, R. Computer professionals, superintendents, maintenance specialists, technicians and skilled tradesmen.

M. Claim examiners, investigators and inspectors.

N. All counselors.

O. Interviewers, manpower specialist, OJT specialists, apprenticeship reps., consultants and field reps.

P. Accountants, auditors, estimators, statisticians, examiners, appraisers, analysts, head clerks and reporters.
PEF is now on Instagram! Follow us today @nyspef
Member’s tragedy struck painful note

To the Editor:
I did not know Charlie McCarthy, whose tragic story you featured in the November Communicator, but the picture you painted of the cruel and inhumane way he was treated by the state Education Department resonated deeply with me.

I do know a thing or two about the sadistic practices of the misanthropic “Bureau of Employee Relations” offices that are burrowed into state agencies like pus-filled cysts. Your article recounts how this long-standing employee was unceremoniously and ignominiously locked out of his workplace, leaving him confused, distraught and bereft -- an act of humiliation that, with little stretch of the imagination, led directly to his subsequent stroke and death.

All of this brought back many unpleasant memories of my own interactions with the in-house “Gestapo squads” that masquerade as labor relations, but whose real purpose, it seems, is to cow employees and instill fear, if they have crossed swords with management.

While the treatment of Mr. McCarthy was infuriating enough, it was beyond the pale of civility for the oleaginous spokesman at the Education Department to lard his cynical condolences to the family with faux expressions of sympathy and concern, knowing full well that they aided and abetted his death with their callous and inhumane treatment.

One truly doesn’t know the agency he or she works for until they’ve been on the receiving end of the Bureau of Employee Relations. Pray it never happens to you

Sincerely,

JAMES CLOSE
MECHANICVILLE
Needs paid family leave now

To the Editor:
I find the negotiations after the end of a contract unacceptable. This should have been resolved and planned to be resolved by a certain date.

You have put me in a very hard position with a baby on the way and no amendment to the current contract to accept the law of the state of NY for paid family leave. This is disheartening.

This is not the state’s fault. You have no one to blame, but yourselves. Shame on you for not addressing a state law for your union members. I am saddened by this. I do not feel protected by our union at this time.

The state mentioned all unions could opt-in for this law regardless of a new contract. I was initially honored to be a part of a union, but now feel it is working against me. I can only feel disappointment at this time.

SUSAN ANDREWS
Selkirk

Editor’s Note:

The PEF negotiating team recognizes the importance of paid family leave and, for that reason, it was one of the first items discussed at negotiations.

The fact is, unions may not “opt in,” regardless of negotiations. Paid family leave, as proposed by the state, requires payroll deductions for PEF members and, therefore, is a term and condition of employment that must be ratified by the membership.

Email your letters to: thecommunicator@pef.org
Wants to vote on contract now

To the Editor:
So we shouldn't count on getting a contract in 2019? Why not let the members decide like a vote? I was counting on a raise this year.

Thanks.

SHARON ALVARO
Clifton Park

Editor’s Note:

Members absolutely will decide. Any tentative agreement reached by the negotiating team must be ratified by the membership in a vote.

While a member’s primary focus may be on getting a pay raise, the current PS&T contract includes 50 articles covering every aspect of your rights and benefits on the job, from health and safety to education and training to vacation leave and job security. The current contract is 247 pages long. No tentative agreement can be sent to members for ratification until it is a complete package.

The many valuable provisions in the current PS&T contract have been achieved over more than 40 years of tough bargaining by PEF on behalf of you, its members. The employer does not simply hand over these rights and benefits. In fact, your employer would like to diminish them. Your union must demand them, fight hard to get them, protect them and enforce them.

Thanks, contract team, for fighting for me

To the Editor:
I would just like to thank the PEF Contract Team for their ongoing fight to get a fair contract for PEF members.

I have been an hourly labor services representative (a provisional appointment) with the state Department of Labor for 7 1/2 years. It has brought me hope in the most recent contract negotiations that PEF is working hard on the issue of hourly employees for permanent status.

No employee should remain an hourly employee for years on end. I receive significantly less pay than my fellow permanent coworkers. I do not receive time off before permanent staff that have been hired long after myself, and I am not eligible for any promotions.

As new permanent staff members are hired, those employees from day one have seniority over me, even though I have been with the Department of Labor for over seven years.

I should not have to take an exam, then wait for a permanent position to open in my office and hope that I am reachable on the eligible list for an interview for a job that I am already doing and excelling in.

This is just wrong and I am grateful that PEF realizes that this is a huge issue that affects so many employees throughout NYS. So thank you for your ongoing fight.

MEAGHAN LAMICA
Morrisonville
Shocked by member’s death after lock out

To the Editor:
It was quite the shocker to read about Charlie McCarthy’s administrative leave and death just some days later.

What could have justified suddenly locking out an employee with 50 years of service?

Sanitation? Was he peeing and pooping at his desk? Was he wearing adult diapers?

He had been bringing in freshly baked bread for other employees for years, but no one ate it at his desk, so there were no crumbs. Was he slopping food all over his work area? His desk was no more cluttered or dusty than anyone else’s when I retired from the state Education Department at the end of 2017. I replaced his computer during his office’s last wave of computer upgrades.

I remember one other older employee who was the only one in his title as a history curriculum specialist who was easily removed due to age. The action was protected from an agediscrimination challenge because it was a title elimination. This was back during the Pataki reduction in force. It was such an irony. He was at PEF headquarters one night making calls for those losing their jobs, only to be served with a pink slip himself the next day. He had the right to bump someone in NYC. I told him he should do it just to get in SED’s face, but he chose retirement.

One of the long time managers for the college licensure office, which is located on the balcony above Charlie’s desk in what is known as Room 5 North in the state Education Department building, overstayed her welcome as an employee before I retired. She aged to the point that she was literally carried out on a stretcher one day due to an urgent health issue that struck without warning.

It’s amazing that the disruption (being locked out) of Charlie’s decades long daily routine killed him. It was quite the warning for many other aging staff who stay on because they cannot afford to retire or because their jobs provide so much meaning to their lives that their days are numbered.

The state does not intend employment to be cradle to grave. At best, you can have a good long run. Then you need to prepare your life for departure, whether that is a simple resignation or a retirement.

TOM PREMO
Waterford
If you want to stay in the same health plan for 2020 that you are using in 2019, you do not need to re-enroll. But if you want to enroll in a different plan for 2020, you must change your enrollment by December 31. That’s also the deadline if you want to opt out of NYSHIP, unless you are currently opted out for 2019. Opt out enrollment for 2019 will continue into 2020, unless you change that option by the deadline.

BCBS dropping out

Please note that effective January 1, 2020, the Empire BlueCross BlueShield (BCBS) HMOs will no longer be offered through NYSHIP. If you are currently enrolled in that plan, you need to make another choice by December 20. If no request to change options is received by December 20, 2019, the employee will automatically be enrolled in The Empire Plan for plan year 2020 to ensure no interruption in coverage.

Rates for 2020 are up

The Empire Plan and HMO premium rates for 2020 have been approved by the state Division of Budget. Empire Plan premium rates are adjusted annually based on enrollee utilization and projected costs. These rates are not negotiated by PEF.

For 2020, there are two sets of premium rates for active employees enrolled in the NYS Health Insurance Program (NYSHIP): a slightly lower rate for the unions that have ratified contracts with the state (CSEA, UUP, NYSCOPBA, PBA, PIA and DC37) and Management/Confidential (M/C) employees, and a slightly higher rate for the unions that have not ratified contracts with the state (PEF, PBANYS, and AFSCME Council 82). The unions that settled contracts agreed to higher copayments and other benefit changes that reduced the cost of their premiums.

The 2020 Empire Plan premium rates for PEF-represented active employees will increase as indicated here: For employees in salary grade 9 and below with individual coverage, $45.94 will be deducted from your biweekly paycheck. That’s up from $43.71. For family coverage, $201.20 will be deducted, which is up from the 2019 rate of $192.68.

If you are in salary grade 10 or higher, the biweekly paycheck deduction will be $61.26 for individual coverage. That’s up by $2.97 from 2019. The deduction for family coverage will be $239.52, which is a $10.19 increase over 2019.

HMO rates for SG 9 and below and SG 10 and above are also available.

Plan starts just days away

The effective dates for Plan Year 2020 are:
• December 26, 2019 for employees on the Administration Lag-Payroll; and
• January 2, 2020 for employees on the Institution Lag-Payroll

The NYSHIP Rates and Deadlines for 2020 flyer was mailed directly to employees’ homes.

Find info, forms online

Not only are option transfer information and rates available online, employees also can download, print and complete the PS-404 Form to change their plan option. Go to the state Department of Civil Service web site at https://cs.ny.gov/employee-benefits. Select your group (PEF) and plan if prompted. Click on Health Benefits & Option Transfer and then on Rates and Health Plan Choices. When you’ve completed your form, submit it to your health benefits administrator (HBA) for processing by the designated deadline. Or change your option online using MyNYSHIP.

HMOs change rates & benefits

For HMOs, the rate increase or decrease varies by HMO and coverage type (individual vs. family). The change in the employee deduction for each HMO can vary because of the HMO premium “capping” formula.

If a PEF-represented state employee enrolls in an HMO, the state’s dollar contribution for the non-prescription drug components (i.e., hospital, medical/surgical and mental health and substance abuse components) of his or her HMO premium will not exceed the state’s dollar contribution for the non-prescription drug components of The Empire Plan premium. The enrollee must pay 100 percent of the premium amount that exceeds the cap. Please review the NYSHIP Rates & Deadlines for 2020 flyer even if you don’t plan to change your health plan option. That’s the best way to avoid the potential of an unpleasant surprise in your first biweekly paycheck with the new deductions.

It is important to look at more than premium rates when selecting or remaining with an HMO. PEF (and the other state employee unions) only negotiate the benefits and other elements of plan design for the Empire Plan. PEF does not negotiate the benefits that HMOs provide.

HMOs are allowed to change benefit levels on an annual basis, independent of the negotiated Empire Plan benefits. That’s why HMO enrollees should review their plan options carefully each year during the Option Transfer Period. By now, all members enrolled in an HMO should have received side-by-side comparisons illustrating any benefit changes their current HMOs will implement for plan year 2020.

Got ??

If you have any questions about the rates, please contact Deborah Stayman, Lorraine Simpkins or Erika Frasier in the Contract Administration Department (x283) at PEF headquarters (800-342-4306).
What size pill $$$ will you have to swallow in 2020?

Some changes are in store for Medicare Part D (prescription drugs) in 2020 and policymakers are contemplating even more. While Medicare directly affects seniors’ health insurance coverage, fundamental price changes under Medicare can sometimes indirectly affect the costs for younger Americans as well.

The Kaiser Family Foundation (KFF), a nonpartisan nonprofit focused on national health issues, recently outlined what the program will look like next year under current law, and under recent legislative and administrative proposals.

In 2020, a provision of the Affordable Care Act (ACA) that slowed the growth rate of the catastrophic coverage threshold will expire, and the threshold will revert to its pre-ACA scheduled level. As a result, the threshold will increase more significantly in 2020 than it has in recent years.

While Part D out-of-pocket expenses are not capped, once beneficiaries pay a certain amount, their obligations are reduced. This reduction comes when they hit what is called the “catastrophic threshold.” In 2019, once a beneficiary pays more than $5,100 toward their prescriptions, they enter catastrophic coverage and are on the hook for only 5 percent of the expenses going forward.

In 2020, this threshold will jump by $1,250, to $6,350. This change could affect individuals who reach this level of spending, unless Congress acts to continue the slower growth rate or otherwise restructure Part D as part of larger drug-pricing-reform efforts.

In the longer term, several proposed bills would change the structure of the Part D program by creating a cap on out-of-pocket expenses and reallocating responsibility for coverage expenses among insurance plans, pharmaceutical manufacturers, the Medicare program, and beneficiaries.

For example, the Senate Finance Committee’s drug pricing bill would cap beneficiary expenses at $3,100 annually, with manufacturers and Medicare each paying 20 percent of the costs once a beneficiary hits that limit and the insurance plan paying 60 percent. For comparison, the House drug pricing bill would set the annual out-of-pocket cap at $2,000, with plans paying 50 percent, manufacturers 30 percent, and Medicare 20 percent after that point. Both bills would eliminate beneficiary liability in the catastrophic phase.

By contrast, the Trump administration’s Part D proposal did not specify the level of the cap, but would require plans to cover 80 percent of the costs once that threshold was reached, with the Medicare program paying 20 percent. I have included the Alliance for Retired Americans Fact Sheet on the House Drug pricing bill below for your review.

House ‘Drug Price Negotiation Bill’

On September 19, U.S. House of Representatives Speaker Nancy Pelosi and House Democrats released the Lower Drug Costs Now Act (H.R. 3). The bill would allow the government to negotiate lower drug prices for people covered by Medicare and private insurance.

H.R. 3 repeals the so-called “noninterference” clause, which currently prohibits the government from negotiating lower drug prices and requires the secretary of Health and Human Services to negotiate on up to 250 of the most expensive drugs, including insulin. The negotiated amount would be available to all payers, thus allowing workers covered by employer-sponsored plans to also benefit from the price reductions. Additional features of H.R. 3 include:

- Limiting Prices to International Drug Index -- Americans pay the highest prices in the world for prescription drugs. H.R. 3 would bring drug prices in the U.S. more in line with those in other industrialized nations. Prices would be limited to 120 percent of the average costs of the drug in six other countries (Canada, United Kingdom, France, Germany, Australia and Japan).

- Excise tax on drug corporation profits -- Drug corporations that refuse to negotiate or those that don’t comply with the agreement would be subject to a 65 percent to 95 percent excise tax on their gross sales.

- Limit increase in drug prices under Medicare Parts B and D -- The proposal will also limit the increase in drug prices under Medicare Part B and D to the cost of inflation. The base year is set at 2016; thus, drug companies that have increased their prices since then would have to lower them or pay a rebate to the government.
• Cap on out-of-pocket drug spending under Medicare -- The bill caps out-of-pocket spending for Medicare beneficiaries at $2,000 a year. Currently, there is no cap on out-of-pocket spending. Out-of-pocket spending continues to escalate each year, particularly for specialty drugs -- high-cost prescription medications used to treat complex, chronic conditions such as rheumatoid arthritis, multiple sclerosis, and cancer. According to the Kaiser Family Foundation, the average out-of-pocket spending for 28 of 30 specialty drugs is $8,109 per year.

• Additional Medicare benefits -- Savings from the negotiations will be reinvested into Medicare and could be used to expand benefits, such as providing hearing, dental and vision coverage.

Region 4 retirees Holiday/Mtg on December 4th, 2019
PEF members from multiple agencies assist with Halloween storm response

By KATE MOSTACCIO

Record rainfall and high winds Halloween night into the following day led to serious flooding in a number of New York municipalities, knocking out power and washing out roads and bridges. PEF members from multiple agencies responded to calls for swift water rescue, road damage, and government building flooding.

“A large swath of rainfall totaling 2 to 5 inches occurred over the Mohawk Valley and southern Adirondacks, resulting in reports of flash flooding,” according to the National Weather Service. “The runoff caused rapid rises on area creeks and streams, with four river gauges reaching record levels. The flooding was extensive over portions of the area, damaging numerous roads and structures and resulting in water rescues. There was one fatality as a result of the flooding.”

**Fire protection specialists**

In Dolgeville, Herkimer County, the East Canada Creek surged over its banks, flooding Main Street and flowing into some residences, prompting swift water rescues. PEF fire protection specialists from the state Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Services' Office of Fire Prevention and Control were on scene to bring residents to safety.

Members of NYS Task Force 2 worked with local responders and pulled members of a family from their flooded home, including a young child. They also saved the family’s dog. A video of the rescue has made rounds on social media.

“We got flagged down for that rescue,” said PEF member Chris Johnson, a fire protection specialist 1. “They had originally asked to use our high-axle vehicle, but we didn’t think we could do something like that because of the danger.”

Instead, they bought in a motorized rescue boat and put their training to use.

“We had an incredible amount of current in the backyard,” Johnson said. “We thought originally we’d try to wait it out. It wasn’t until the occupants of the home said they were going to try to swim out that we went in.”

If the residents, or even rescuers, had attempted to cross the backyard flooding by swimming it would have ended badly, Johnson said.

“If anyone had gone in the water there was a good chance they would not have made it out,” he said.

For the rescuers, putting their skills to work is rewarding.

“We all did this because this is a job we love to do and we love helping people out,” Johnson said. “I don’t think everyone out there gives themselves enough credit. We sometimes forget about the risks. But for the outcome in Dolgeville and throughout the Mohawk Valley, it was absolutely, 100 percent, worth it.”

Familiar faces joined the PEF fire protection specialists.

“There were a lot of familiar faces going through from the training and other responses we had done,” Johnson said. “State Police, DEC, we have a great connection and do a lot of training together. It’s helpful, especially in an incident like this.”

Agency cooperation was crucial to successful rescues.

“All the different agencies working together, getting the job done, is incredibly rewarding,” Johnson said. “It’s something we train for and we’re happy and glad we do even though we hope we never have to use it.”

In addition to the family pulled from the flooded home, State Fire members helped evacuate trailer parks and aided a woman and her dog in the town of Schuyler, who had become trapped in a vehicle.
“I think it’s an incredible feeling,” Johnson said of being able to help the communities. “I’m sure everybody who was there had the exact same feeling, knowing that we made a difference. It’s indescribable.”

Department of Transportation (DOT)

When Greg Beach, an assistant engineer with DOT’s Region 4, Rochester, saw the email looking for damage assessment volunteers to travel to hard-hit areas of flooding the day after Halloween — he jumped at the chance to help.

Region 2 had already worked on assessing the state roads. “We did the local, county and town roads,” Beach said. “We drive every road and look for damage.” When they find a location, they take photos and note the GPS coordinates and this information is loaded by iPad into a database.

If you’ve ever used 511NY, you’ve benefited from damage assessments done by DOT personnel. The service will tell users which roads are closed or when there are lane closures.

“We have our normal assignments, but this is above and beyond,” Beach said. “They first reach out to us for volunteers. For me, I’m out of Rochester, so I was two and a half hours away. I spent the night and worked most of Saturday.”

For Beach, this was the first opportunity he had to volunteer in this capacity.

“We’re gone through a lot of training,” he said. Six members from Beach’s region volunteered to travel to Herkimer County. “We paired up as assessment teams.”

Seeing the damage first-hand hit home.

“You see flooding on TV,” Beach said. “You just say, ‘Wow, that’s bad.’ When you’re there, seeing it first hand, it hits a little harder. When we pull up in a state vehicle, people are excited to see us,” he continued. “We have to explain to them we are out there for damage assessment and we can’t tell them when things will be fixed. But, it feels pretty good to help out. It was a good experience and I’m glad I was able to help.”

Fellow DOT member, Scott Martin, a senior engineering technician in DOT’s Geotechnical department, also assisted with damage assessments in the Utica area — above and beyond his typical assignments running graduation or compaction tests and preparing boring logs from DOT drillers.

“Knowing we provide vital services to communities feels good,” said Martin, a PEF member for three years. “It’s nice to be able to help other regions.”

Office of Information Technology Services (ITS)

PEF member Jason Bennett, an Information Technology Specialist 2 with the state Office of Information Technology Services (ITS), still showed up for work after spending Halloween trick-or-treating with his family, then attending a Halloween gathering at the Oriskany Volunteer Fire Department — where he is an active volunteer firefighter — and finally spending hours responding to the storm with his fellow firefighters.

“He got a call to help deal with the flooding in the Utica area,” said fellow PEF ITS member Jim Jaskula, an Information Technology Specialist 3 in Syracuse. “He was out all night doing volunteer fire duty and he didn’t get home until 4 a.m. He didn’t have to come to work after, it’s in the contract, but he did.”

Bennett said he’d only made it home for an hour and a half Halloween night before he got called out for the weather. It quickly became apparent the rising water was going to be bad.

“A small babbling brook turned into a raging river,” Bennett said. In that instance, there were 70 to 80 residents living in a trailer park on the other side of the water — and some of them wanted out. “It took about an hour and a half,” he said. “The hardest thing was that people try to drive through the water. You can’t do that.”

Later that night, around 10:30, Bennett’s department was called to assist in a little village where more residents wanted to get out. But cars stuck in roads and impassable roadways made it very hard to navigate.

“The water was waist deep in places, if not higher,” Bennett said. “State Fire showed up and helped out.”

The Oriskany OTTERS (Oriskany Technical Team Emergency Rescue Swimmers), as they call themselves, are well suited to water rescues.

Bennett trained in swift water rescue at the State Fire Academy and he is state certified. In Whitesboro, flooding seems to happen “almost every other year,” he said. Having a training facility right in Oriskany Fire’s backyard is helpful. “We hope we don’t have to use it, but at least we’re trained.”

Bennett isn’t the only PEF member volunteering in his community with the local fire department.
Oriskany's fire chief, Jeff Burkhart, is a PEF member who works for DHSES as a fire protection specialist. PEF member Charles "Bud" Koss, assistant fire chief, by day works for the Office of General Services as an assistant construction superintendent.

Bennett and fellow ITS PEF members were also in the right place at the right time when a union meeting they were attending in Utica happened to coincide with the storm and there was a need for ITS support in the state Department of Transportation’s Regional Operations Center.

“I received a text from our district manager that we were needed to assist the Utica DOT Regional Operations Center which was activated after we got to the meeting,” Jaskula said. “Jason Enoch is the ITS Central manager for Utica and he quickly responded to the NYSDOT ROC located in the Utica State Office Building. I cancelled the meeting and brought our entire staff up to assist DOT.”

He said damage was minimal, but ITS staff are on-call for situations like this one.

“There was only one minor issue with a laptop and we had backup equipment available,” Jaskula said. “In an emergency, it’s intense in the Regional Operations Center. They’re taking care of the flooding and the roads.”

Jaskula is proud to work for ITS. “I love ITS,” he said. “We’re getting more people out in the regions where we never had a career ladder. Now we do.”

Recognizing heroic efforts

Gov. Andrew Cuomo’s Director of Emergency Management Operations Michael Kopy, during a cabinet meeting, praised the efforts of the State Fire employees who responded quickly and put their lives on the line.

“Six people, including an infant child, were trapped in a building,” he said in a video. “The representatives from State Fire cut their way into the back of the property and took a Zodiac life raft, tied ropes, and risked their lives to save that family.

“I am certain that if any one of them had gone into the water last night, they would have died,” he continued. “It was truly a pleasure to see them work like that. We are thankful as New Yorkers to have people who are trained to that level and willing to risk their lives, so I thank them here today.”
OPWDD fire safety reps aid community following storms

By KATE MOSTACCIO

With backgrounds in fire service and code enforcement, fire safety representatives at the state Office for People with Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD) spend much of their time training fellow OPWDD staff on fire prevention and safety and making sure residence facilities are up to code.

“On a normal day, we can do a lot of different things,” said Mark Villa, a fire safety representative at Sunmount DDSO for the last three years. “We’re big on educating OPWDD staff on fire safety related concerns. A lot of our job is training staff for their fire safety refresher every year.”

These PEF members also research and do building code reviews for their agency.

“If we receive a citation from the Office of Fire Prevention and Control or the Division of Quality Improvement, we come up with solutions to fix the problems,” Villa said. Fire safety reps think outside the box, offering alternative ways to address code issues than just financial fixes.

They also oversee construction projects at OPWDD homes. But, that’s not all they do. After high winds and flooding this Halloween, OPWDD fire safety representatives jumped to the aid of their local community.

“We’re part of Emergency Services Function 6 at the state Emergency Operations Center level,” Villa explained. ESF Function 6 encompasses supporting and facilitating the coordination of mass care, sheltering, emergency assistance, housing, and human services throughout the state during response and short term recovery of an incident. “The governor activated the EOC in response to that storm and we were deployed to Hamilton County. We assisted with collecting data and information from citizens about damages they suffered and compiled it to try to get to the FEMA threshold.”

In order for FEMA, the Federal Emergency Management Agency, to come in with funding, monetary damages have to reach a certain threshold, Villa said.

This was the first time Villa has been deployed to assist the community.

“Most of the time we are going out and assisting our own houses,” Villa said. “In the Sunmount area, we have 43 community houses. Other areas have more than 200 homes.”

Interacting with the public was a new experience. An OPWDD day program facility in the town of Speculator became a temporary disaster assistance center. “A lot of people didn’t know why we were there,” Villa said. “A lot of people thought we were there to hand out FEMA money. We had to do a lot of educating for the public. The people were pretty receptive to it.”

Coming from 10 years in the volunteer fire service, spanning multiple departments, Villa is no stranger to adapting to a situation.

“‘In the fire service, we adapt to a lot of different things,” he said. “We consoled people and offered assistance where we could. We gave out contact information for the Department of Social Services and local county agencies. They were happy about that.”

OPWDD fire safety staff also worked closely with the municipalities. “It was good working with the actual municipalities to make sure they were on the same page and knew we were there to gather as much information as we could,” Villa said.

Getting out and helping the public also offered insight into what services OPWDD offers.

“Before I started with OPWDD, I didn’t really know about the agency,” Villa said. “Fire safety is a passion and it’s important to the agency that we make sure our houses are safe for our people that live in them.”

Villa said fire safety representatives strive to make OPWDD facilities as safe as possible — by preventing incidents before they happen. “We do more than just telling people, ‘You can’t do that or have that,’” Villa said. “We’re there to educate them and help them understand why they can’t do certain things.”
PEF retiree still serving New Yorkers, assists in the passage of a prescription drug recall notification bill

By KATE MOSTACCIO

When Ron Goldstein, a PEF retiree who served more than 20 years on the PEF Executive Board, found out while surfing the Internet that the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) had recalled his generic version of the prescription blood pressure medication Valsartan, he was understandably upset that he wasn’t notified.

According to the FDA, “the recalled products contain an impurity, N-nitrosodimethylamine (NDMA). The presence of the potentially cancer-causing NDMA was unexpected, and the agency believes the NDMA is related to changes in the way the active substance was manufactured. Some levels of the impurity may have been in the valsartan-containing products for as long as four years.”

“Not all manufacturers of the widely prescribed drug were involved,” Goldstein said. “Unfortunately, I had been taking one of the affected versions for over three months.”

In the United States, 9 out of 10 prescriptions filled are for generic drugs, according to the FDA.

Goldstein works as a volunteer in the office of Assemblyman Daniel Rosenthal every Friday afternoon and serves as Rosenthal’s PEF Political Action Liaison (PAL). He had an opportunity to effect change — so he spoke up.

“I told him that, in my opinion, legislation was needed requiring pharmacies to notify customers when their prescription medicines are recalled for a major safety issue,” Goldstein said. Being in the office weekly gave him a chance to follow-up. “I would ask, ‘What are you doing with my suggestion?’”

“His staff followed up on my proposal and he introduced a bill to require patient notification by telephone or mail within three days of an FDA Class 1 recall,” Goldstein said.

Assemblyman Rosenthal and Senator Leroy Comrie sponsored the bill, A.4781B/S.5091B. It passed both the Assembly and the Senate. “There didn’t seem to be much opposition,” Goldstein said. Gov. Andrew Cuomo signed the bill into law on October 18.

“Ron Goldstein volunteers his time in our office every week and played a critical role in ensuring New Yorkers are protected against harmful prescription drug recalls,” said Assemblymember Daniel Rosenthal (D-Flushing). “Through personal experience, Ron recognized the gaps in process and brought the idea for this bill to the table. This is a textbook example of how an individual and an idea can make a positive difference for so many people.”

Helping fellow New Yorkers “feels great,” Goldstein said. “This is particularly good for seniors, who on average take more long term prescription medicines,” he said. “If you buy a car and there is a recall, they have to notify you. Until now, there was no requirement to notify you about medication recalls.”

Goldstein is no stranger to legislation.

He began his 37-year state career with the State Consumer Protection Board. “While in that job, I suggested two pieces of legislation. They made me write it,” he said. Both bills were supported by the Governor and passed the Assembly but died in the State Senate. “Thirty-five, 40 years later, I got finally got a bill through.”

While he didn’t write this legislation, he credits Rosenthal’s staff and the Legislative Drafting Office, he is proud of his role. “It’s a good bill,” he said.

Lobbyists for small drug stores had argued the duty to notify patients should lay with the doctors prescribing the medication, Goldstein said. “The reason that doesn’t work is that your doctor doesn’t know the brand and lot number that you received.” Only the pharmacy has that information. And, like the Valsartan recall, not all manufacturers of a drug may be involved.

The Governor’s Office applauded the bill.

“People deserve to know when a medication that’s supposed to make them feel better may actually make them sicker, and it’s common sense that pharmacies communicate that information to patients in real time,” Cuomo said in a statement.

For those taking medications that are subject to a Class 1 recall impacted by the bill, the FDA advises them not to stop taking their medication without first speaking with their prescribing physician.
The PEF Veterans’ Committee collected $500 from a raffle at the 2019 Convention luncheon and chose to donate the proceeds to the Albany Housing Coalition.

“As the Director of Veterans Services and a 28-year Army Veteran, I am always amazed at the efforts put forth to raise money in support of our homeless veterans,” said Albany Housing Coalition’s Lee Vartigian. “We rely heavily on grants but just as important monetary donations to fill the gaps. Our organization is blessed to have Veteran Committees working hard to support all aspects of our organization.”

Members of the PEF Veterans Committee are Chair Bruce Jagroop, Rich Fletcher, Harms, Chris Buman, Latonia Taylor, and Tara Bentley, PEF staff.

The coalition assists homeless and at-risk veterans, offering rapid-response assistance and supportive services for veterans’ families.

“For those at risk of eviction, the program may be able to pay rent arrears and eliminate other barriers to remaining in their home,” Harms said. “The program is open to all eligible veterans who are within Albany, Schenectady or Rensselaer counties. Ultimately, the goal of this program is to eliminate homelessness among veterans in the Capital District.”

The Albany Housing Coalition commended the PEF Veterans Committee for its donation.
The PEF Civil Service Enforcement/Research Department (CSE/R) is continuing its efforts to meet member engagement and education needs, and increase access to available resources related to the work of the department. This month, CSE/R is highlighting the offerings of the NYS Career Mobility Office (CMO).

Did you know that PEF labor-management committee chairs, Executive Board members, council leaders, and field representatives throughout the state can arrange to have live civil service trainings and webinars presented to their members and colleagues?

If you are interested in receiving a training or webinar, contact your PEF leader and ask them to request it.

Through the CMO, union leaders and staff can plan and host trainings on topics addressing the administration of the Civil Service merit and fitness system, position information, and career plan development.

As the CMO is partially funded by PEF and other negotiating units, PEF relies on CMO staff to conduct trainings, workshops, and modules specifically tailored to the needs of New York state agencies and their employees. CMO staff members are eager to work with PEF leaders to design and schedule the most relevant programming for members around the state.

Topics covered by the CMO include areas of frequent concern to PEF members as they relate to civil service enforcement. These topics include, but are not limited to:

- **Understanding the Merit System:** Learn how to navigate your career in the Civil Service Merit System;

- **Examinations and eligible lists:** Learn about the examination process, how lists are used and the capabilities of the Eligible List Management System (ELMS) online; and

- **Glossary of Titles Inquiry Tool (GOT-IT) Website Demonstration:** Learn how to use resources available on the GOT-IT website to navigate your career.

Additional information about CMO offerings can be found via their information packet and the Career Mobility Office website: [https://careermobilityoffice.cs.ny.gov/cmo/index.cfm](https://careermobilityoffice.cs.ny.gov/cmo/index.cfm).

Please contact James Keough at the Career Mobility Office for more information about scheduling trainings: (518) 485-6199, or online at cmo@cs.ny.gov. You may also contact Lydia Brassard in the PEF CSE/R at lbrassard@pef.org with additional questions.
Shop online at [https://www.blvdgraphics.com/category/pef/](https://www.blvdgraphics.com/category/pef/)

**NOW OPEN**

**Sign up today for the eCommunicator**

Keeping PEF members current on PEF news, emailed to your mobile device or home computer monthly. [www.pef.org/ecommunicator-signup/](http://www.pef.org/ecommunicator-signup/)
Ailing members need your leave donations

The following PEF members have reported a need for leave donations due to the need for medical treatment or recuperation from illness or injury.

Donations are made from annual leave and donors must retain at least 10 days of annual leave after donating. To donate leave to a specific person listed below, call the number after their name.

- **Brenda Bannon** is an addictions program specialist at the state Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services in Albany. Call 518-457-2830 and ask for Human Resources;
- **Kimberly Benware** is a teaching and research center specialty nurse at SUNY Upstate University Hospital in Syracuse. Call 315-464-4943;
- **Marco Cardenas** is a parole officer at the state Department of Corrections and Community Supervision parole office in Peekskill. Call 914-654-8690;
- **Brooke Dimare** is a social work supervisor at Mohawk Valley Psychiatric Center in Utica. Call 315-738-4424;
- **Ruthanne Duckworth** is a licensed master social worker at Mohawk Valley Psychiatric Center in Utica. Call 315-738-4424;
- **Margaret Lagonegro-Coar** is a nurse at Hudson Valley Developmental Disabilities Services Office. Call 845-947-6226;
- **Michael Mansky** is an offender rehabilitation coordinator at Greene Correctional Facility in Coxsackie. Call 518-731-2741;
- **Julie Melancon** is an environmental program specialist at the state Department of Environmental Conservation in Syracuse. Call 518-402-9273;
- **Osayame Osemwegie** is a licensed master social worker at NYC Children's Center's site in Brooklyn. Call 718-221-4500 ext. 3045;
- **Joseph Ryan** is a senior business management assistant at the state Gaming Commission in Schenectady. Call 518-457-4272; and
- **Mandi Schultz** is a supervisor of the inmates’ grievance program at Five Points Correctional Facility in Romulus. Call 607-869-5111.

The rules for making and receiving leave donations (such as leave recipients may not have had any disciplinary actions or unsatisfactory performance evaluations within their last three years of state employment) are set forth on pages 181 and 182 of the 2016-19 PS&T Contract. If you, or a PEF member you know, need leave donations because of a medical issue, you may contact The Communicator to request publication of that need. Send requests to thecommunicator@pef.org, or call 800-342-4306, ext. 271. Be sure to provide your contact information.
PEF’s gratitude and best wishes go out to its members who are retiring and moving on to the next chapter of their lives.

The union hopes they will join PEF Retirees and remain active and valued participants in the PEF family.

This month, we salute:

• William Carter, PEF Division 190, state Department of Taxation and Finance;
• Denise Conroy, PEF Division 190, state Department of Taxation and Finance;
• Steven Crodelle, PEF Division 357, state Office of Information Technology Services;
• Garfield Gordon, PEF Division 241, Creedmoor Psychiatric Center;
• Patricia Hagen, PEF Division 209, Long Island Developmental Disabilities Services Office;
• James Herron, PEF Division 241, Creedmoor Psychiatric Center;
• Colleen Jess, PEF Division 190, state Department of Taxation and Finance;
• Jan Lemanski, PEF Division 240, state Insurance Fund;
• Darryl Reeves, PEF Division 240, state Insurance Fund;
• Matthew Thomas, PEF Division 241, Creedmoor Psychiatric Center; and
• Joong He Yoo, PEF Division 241, Creedmoor Psychiatric Center.

Are you or PEF members you know retiring? Please send information for this column to thecommunicator@pef.org.
PEF Division 263 Department of Audit & Control showing support for their Contract Team!! #PEFDOESIT every day!! #PEFDeservedaFairContract #WeAreUnionStrong

PEF OAG members meet for their contract update and membership meeting with PEF Region 8 Coordinator Michael Blue @mkb633 #PEFDOESIT! #SupportPEFContractTeam

Here is #PEF Division 304, Central NY DDSO in Syracuse at membership meeting supporting the #PEF Contract Team!! #PEFDOESIT! #SupportOurTeam #FairContractNow
#PEFDOESIT OPWDD STYLE!! PEF Region 12 - Division 209, Long Island DDSO General Membership meeting. #WeAreUnionStrong

Safeguarding New York state. Advancing scientific breakthroughs. #PEFDOESIT. #WeArePEF #WeAreUnionStrong #FairContract
Lots of holiday spirit and cheer with #PEF Region 11 Bernadette O'Connor and Carrie Saunders at PEF Division 244 Brooklyn DDSO Social Workers Thanksgiving Dinner on Friday November, 22! #PEFFamily #WeAreUnionStrong #PEFDeservesaFairContract
PEF is now on Instagram! Follow us today @nyspef