

# IMPACT

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## COLANGELO VISITS UPSTATE SHOPS CONCERNED ABOUT ELIMINATION OF DEP



**President Joe Colangelo visited both of the Union's upstate shops in early January to check on members and talk to them about issues specific to their locations.**

The Grahamsville and Ashokan shops, each located 60-90 miles north of New York City, are both DEP facilities responsible for maintaining hundreds of vehicles from a radius that extends from New York City to the Pennsylvania border.

Keith Kerman, Chief Fleet Officer, Deputy Commissioner, also recently visited the two facilities, and mentioned to members that these shops were not being considered for consolidation due to their remote location and number of vehicles maintained. Colangelo said Local 246 remains cautiously optimistic that Kerman was being forthright, but will keep on top of any rumors to the

*Pictured in left photo are James Letohic (Auto Mechanic Diesel) and Robert Diaz (Auto Mechanic Diesel) from Grahamsville.*

*In right photo are Auto Mechanics Dwayne Albright and Gordon Haaland from Ashokan.*

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## New York City SEIU Local 246

217 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10007

Phone: (212) 233-0616 • Fax: (212) 385-1859

Outside NY: 1-800-903-0246

Web site: [www.nyclocal246.org](http://www.nyclocal246.org)

**PRESIDENT . . . . . JOSEPH A. COLANGELO**

**VICE PRESIDENT . . . . . CHARLES PASTORELLI**

**SEC/TREAS. . . . . RAYMOND S. SCHACOR**

**RECORDING SECRETARY . . . . . JAMES GRILLO**

**SENTINEL . . . . . PHILIP MAZAL**

### Union Trustees

John Cox . . . . . (718) 217-8947

Wayne Esposito . . . . . (718) 734-3718

Andrew Weinstein . . . . . (718) 393-7321

Business Agent

Thomas Graziano . . . . . (212) 233-0616

### Shop Stewards

Mark Bardes . . . . . (718) 963-5751

Sheet Metal Citywide Representative

Jeff Blond . . . . . (718) 334-9113

Sanitation, 4th Floor CRS

Salvatore Brucculeri . . . . . (718) 334-9171

Sanitation, 5th Floor CRS

Joe Buzzell . . . . . (917) 501-5590

DOT — MGO Field Representative

Edward Clas . . . . . (718) 546-1308/1725

Correction

Stephen Codd . . . . . (718) 318-4022

Parks

Giorgio Dessi . . . . . (718) 447-1100

DEP ext. 311

Glenn Holden . . . . . (718) 317-1747

Sanitation, Richmond Boro

Michael Faix . . . . . (718) 892-5992

Sanitation, Bronx Area

Robert Lucey . . . . . (718) 571-7248

Fire Dept.

Chris Olsen . . . . . (718) 743-6925

Sanitation — Brooklyn & Cioffe Area

Anthony Piazza . . . . . (718) 649-8255

Sanitation & Cioffe

Stanley Pirpinias . . . . . (718) 495-5410

Police

Anthony Reyes . . . . . (718) 784-6538

Fire Dept.

Roy Rodriguez . . . . . (212) 926-1033

Sanitation

Jason Vetter . . . . . (718) 334-8940/8977

Sanitation — Queensboro Shop

Edward Wojcik . . . . . (646) 210-7932

Dept. of Education

Joseph Yovino . . . . . (718) 476-7543

Police

Mordechai Ziv . . . . . (718) 533-5784

DOT

### Office Staff

Rosemary Aragona, Maureen A. Byrne, Pat Cruz

NEWSLETTER DESIGN/PRODUCTION:

Marci Rosenblum ♦ RWD Group

2 | (845) 364-0222 ♦ [marci@rwdgroup.com](mailto:marci@rwdgroup.com)

# Message from President JOSEPH A. COLANGELO



As we move ahead into the month of February and winter sets in, so does the chill facing workers across this country. Not only do the attacks on the labor movement never end, but they are spreading like wildfire.

As of January 31, GOP lawmakers in Kansas and Missouri are considering legislation to prohibit dues collection and even voluntary dues deduction from paychecks for public employees. They call it "paycheck protection," but it's really "paycheck deception" and it is part of the new playbook being used to eliminate public employee unions. One recent article pointed out that some 20 states are considering some type of restriction on payroll deduction of union dues by public employees.

Quite honestly, this looks a lot like a march from state to state to attack unions that support progressive causes and progressive politicians, just as we had in the last two years in Wisconsin, Ohio, Indiana, and Michigan.

The labor assault even has traveled closer to home. Backed by powerful national business interests, conservative legislators in Pennsylvania recently announced a new push to bring so-called "right-to-work" laws to the Keystone state. Six Republican legislators are introducing a package of bills aimed at crippling the ability of labor unions to collect dues from members. Pennsylvania labor leaders say the package is part of a broad assault on labor that began in 2010 when the GOP won control of the governor's office and both houses of the legislature.

And right in our own backyard, we are dealing with similar fights to protect our members. The Mayor continues to push for health care premium relief by forcing City workers

## BENEFIT ENHANCEMENT FUNDS IMPROVE EYEGLASS COVERAGE

Trustees of both the Active and Retiree Welfare Funds have approved significant changes to our prescription eyeglass plan. This change will increase the plan from two pairs of prescription glasses per family to three pairs of prescription glasses per rolling 12-month period per family. This includes examinations, selected frames and selected lenses.

"The Trustees have always been there to guide the funds' expenses in a financially prudent manner and now because of that, we are able to make this improvement that will greatly benefit our members," said President Joe Colangelo.

to pay a portion of our health insurance. *Crain's* recently published an article entitled "Report: City Workers should pony up for Health Insurance," which says that in order for the City to help stem the steady increase in health cost, workers should start to contribute. The author cites a report by the Citizens Budget Commission, which is comprised of real estate executives and business executives whose only agenda is the bottom line and profits. They have no regard for workers and only view employees as tools used to maximize profits. They believe municipal workers can be easily replaced like any other machine once it breaks or becomes obsolete.

We all know that in recent years, states have fought to cope with the fiscal crisis brought on by the budgetary impacts of our most recent recession. No less could be said of workers on a personal level.

The most obvious way that governments and political leaders have attacked the problem is by attacking public service workers and their unions, making them the scapegoats for all budgetary problems regardless of the real facts.

These attacks have resulted in a considerable weakening of unions and worker rights and caused both management and labor to divert precious financial and human resources into political battles rather than a search for collaborative solutions. This can be seen most recently with proposed changes to New York's Binding Arbitration Law.

The Taylor Law Binding Arbitration Bill (S.2607/A.3007) seeks to modify the binding arbitration dispute resolution provisions of the Taylor Law. This legislation affects police, fire fighters and other public safety/first responders; it does not affect other public sector unions that also have the right to final and binding arbitration — at least not yet. It is New York State public policy to promote harmonious and cooperative relationships between government and its employees. This legislation runs counter to this policy, and seems to lack any input at all from the labor movement — the very people it will directly impact.

A core piece of the proposed bill is to define public employers as fiscally distressed. However, the criteria set forth does not provide the full financial picture or analysis of the public employer's ability

to pay. It does not consider the wealth of the geographical area served by a particular government, nor does it consider revenue enhancements, such as fees or taxes that can be levied and raised or collected from delinquent taxpayers. The bill does not consider alternative cost savings measures that can safely be implemented, nor does it consider other funding sources available to the municipality or budgetary reductions that can be achieved.

Seems to me like there were quite a few things not considered before our elected officials introduced this bill. This legislation limits what an arbitration panel can award when a public employer is declared to be distressed, which leaves a lot of room for interpretation.

A letter was sent to the Governor by Harold Scheitberger, President of the International Association of Fire Fighters, in which he wrote: "Quite frankly, we would expect this type of an attack from conservative Governors in right to work states. We certainly do not expect such a frontal assault on front line Fire Fighters and Police Officers from a purportedly progressive governor in a state that has been a citadel for organized labor."

I can't agree more with his assessment. It is highly unfortunate that after labor has suffered through Tier VI, and state workers were forced to settle on contracts to avoid the threat of 10,000 layoffs, and we had to deal with contracts that increased health care premium copays, that Governor Cuomo would now push an agenda that continues to diminish workers' rights.

More than ever, we must continue to fight for our members because not only do we protect the benefits, salaries and working conditions for those in the labor movement, we set the tone for non-unionized labor as well. This is really what the labor movement is all about. Even if the press portrays us as only caring about our members and nothing else, we know the truth. Unions have a substantial impact on the compensation and work lives of both unionized and non-unionized workers.

## ACTIVE MEMBER SHOE VOUCHERS

The Officers and Executive Board of Local 246 announce that all **Active Dues Paying Members** may be reimbursed up to \$60 toward the expense incurred for one pair of work-related shoes purchased AT ANY STORE. This is an increase in the reimbursement rate from last year. **Shoes must be purchased between January 1 and May 31, 2013. Claim must be submitted by June 15, 2013.** All active members should have already received a reimbursement form with instructions. Anyone who did not receive one should contact the Union office.

## NO GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING

### in February

Reminder that there is no February membership meeting. President Joe Colangelo said that if there is an urgent matter that needs to be brought to members' attention, a special notice will be posted or mailed out. **Regular monthly meetings will resume in March.** Members can continue to visit the Union's web site at [www.nyclocal246.org](http://www.nyclocal246.org) for information.



# GOOD WELFARE

## IN MEMORIAM:

**William Anderson Jr.**  
Retired Auto Mechanic — Pol

**Joseph McDermott**  
Retired Auto Mechanic — Fire

**Herman Krobath**  
Retired Auto Mechanic — San

## NEW MEMBERS:

**John Kapica**  
Auto Mechanic — Pol

**Darryl Horton, Jr.**  
Auto Service Worker — San

**Junior Samuel**  
Machinist — DEP

## RETIRING MEMBERS:

**Stephen Easparro**  
Auto Mechanic — San

**Robert Lovdahl**  
MGO — DOT

**VISIT THE UNION'S WEBSITE**  
[www.nyclocal246.org](http://www.nyclocal246.org)

for the most up-to-date information

## NEWBORN CHILDREN:

**Christopher Longmore** (Girl)  
Auto Mechanic Diesel — San

## IN MEMORIAM FAMILY:

**Frank Marcone** (Wife)  
Retired Machinist — DEP

**Louis Salazar** (Brother-in-Law)  
Auto Mechanic — Fire

**Mario LoCasio** (Brother)  
Retired Motor Grader Operator — DOT

# 2013 HOLIDAY CALENDAR

<b>New Year's Day</b> . . . . .	<b>Tuesday</b> . . . . .	<b>January 1, 2013</b>
<b>Martin Luther King Birthday</b> . . . . .	<b>Monday</b> . . . . .	<b>January 21, 2013</b>
<b>Lincoln's Birthday</b> . . . . .	<b>Tuesday</b> . . . . .	<b>February 12, 2013</b>
<b>Washington's Birthday</b> . . . . .	<b>Monday</b> . . . . .	<b>February 18, 2013</b>
<b>Memorial Day</b> . . . . .	<b>Monday</b> . . . . .	<b>May 27, 2013</b>
<b>Independence Day</b> . . . . .	<b>Thursday</b> . . . . .	<b>July 4, 2013</b>
<b>Labor Day</b> . . . . .	<b>Monday</b> . . . . .	<b>September 2, 2013</b>
<b>Columbus Day</b> . . . . .	<b>Monday</b> . . . . .	<b>October 14, 2013</b>
<b>Election Day</b> . . . . .	<b>Tuesday</b> . . . . .	<b>November 5, 2013</b>
<b>Veteran's Day</b> . . . . .	<b>Monday</b> . . . . .	<b>November 11, 2013</b>
<b>Thanksgiving Day</b> . . . . .	<b>Thursday</b> . . . . .	<b>November 28, 2013</b>
<b>Christmas Day</b> . . . . .	<b>Wednesday</b> . . . . .	<b>December 25, 2013</b>

## UPDATE YOUR RECORDS FOR 2013

It's important for our office to have correct information for each member. Please call the Union Office at (212) 233-0616 to advise us of any of the following changes:

- Name Changes
- Domestic Partner
- Spouse's Name
- Marital Status
- Newborn
- Title/Department Changes
- Address Changes
- Home and work telephone numbers
- Children in College
- Retiree Status
- Compensation
- Off Payroll
- Termination
- Resignation
- Deaths
- Reporting Ill

New members must send us a copy of marriage certificates and/or dependents' birth certificates. Members who are divorced must send us a copy of your divorce papers. You will be responsible for any outstanding bills your spouse/domestic partner use that they are not entitled to.

# NEWS & NOTES

**LAWRENCE KOMNICK MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP** — Applications to apply for our brother Lawrence Komnick Memorial Scholarship Award are now available. To receive an application for dependent children, **ACTIVE MEMBERS** should call the Union Office. The scholarship is a \$1,000 award and is a one-time only grant. **Applications must be completed and post-marked by April 30, 2013**, and include an official transcript of SAT scores that is signed and verified by the high school. Members' dependent children graduating high school in June 2013 are eligible to apply. The names of those received with the top 10 highest SAT scores will be put into a raffle and one name will be picked to receive this scholarship award. Drawing for the scholarship will take place at the May 2013 General Membership Meeting.

**NEW PRESCRIPTION PLAN CARDS** — Members should have already received their new Citizens Rx prescription drug plan cards in the mail. Anyone who has not received theirs, or who received cards with incorrect information, should contact the Local 246 office at 212-233-0616. The new cards became effective January 1, 2013. Mail in order forms for prescriptions can be downloaded from the website. The Union encourages all members to use this method as it saves the Fund money and is a better benefit than having a prescription filled at a local drug store.

**RETIREE DUES FOR 2013** — Retiree dues for 2013 were payable in full by January 31, 2013. If you have not already done so, please send your check or money order for \$60 payable to NYC Local 246, and send to the Union at 217 Broadway, Suite 501, New York, NY 10007. The amount is nominal and just covers the per capita and retiree mailings.

**NOTIFY US IF PROMOTED** — You must notify your Union immediately when you are promoted to another title such as foreman, or a provisional title that is not represented by Local 246. It is also very important that you notify the Union office or your Shop Steward immediately by

telephone or in writing if you are going to be taken off payroll, after you use up all of your time due to sickness, accident or compensation injury. **Remember...you lose your union welfare benefits and your health insurance coverage from the day you are terminated.** You will not be eligible for welfare benefits (prescription, dental, optical, hearing aid benefit) from the date you come off payroll, are terminated, or promoted to a non Local 246 title. Any bills incurred from that date until you go back on payroll, rehired, reinstated or resume a Local 246 title are your responsibility. You will be mailed a bill by the Fund for any charges incurred by the Welfare Fund while it is not receiving welfare contributions on your behalf. You can arrange through COBRA to continue your health insurance coverage. If you choose COBRA, you qualify to obtain your welfare benefit by paying a monthly premium directly to the NYC Local 246 Welfare Fund, for as long as you stay on COBRA.

**CITIZENS RX PREFERRED FORMULARY** — The 2013 Citizens RX National Preferred Formulary is now available on the Local 246 website at [www.nyclocal246.org](http://www.nyclocal246.org). This list contains the most commonly prescribed drugs. It represents an abbreviated version of the drug list (formulary) that is at the core of your prescription-drug benefit plan. The list is not all-inclusive and does not guarantee coverage. In addition to using this list, you are encouraged to ask your doctor to prescribe generic drugs when-ever appropriate. An asterisk next to a drug signifies it is subject to nonformula status when a generic is available. Not all the drugs are covered by all prescription-drug benefit programs. Check your benefit materials for the specific drugs covered and co-payments for your prescription drug benefit program. For specific question about your coverage, please call the phone number printed on your ID card. If you do not have internet access, or cannot download the list, please contact the Union office at (212) 233-0616.

**PROPERTY DAMAGE LOSS RESULTING FROM SANDY** — All SEIU Local 246 members who, as a result of hurricane Sandy, had property damage loss of personal tools and or equipment used in the performance of their duties should file a claim with the Comptroller's Office Bureau of Law and Adjustments using the claim forms that can be found on the Union's website at [www.nyclocal246.org](http://www.nyclocal246.org) on the News page. **Please be advised that you have 90 days from the date of occurrence to file your claims, which must be notarized.** Time is running out. All claims must be submitted in person or mailed by certified mail.

**COLLEGE LETTERS DUE FOR SPRING SEMESTER** — Retiree members with dependent(s) ages 19 to 23, who are attending college full time, must submit proof each semester, Fall and Spring. Spring semester letters are due by February 15, 2013. A letter that is signed, dated and bearing the seal of the College Registrar, stating that the dependent is a full-time, matriculated student is required as proof of eligibility for Prescription Drug Benefits. Claims for dependents whose letters have expired will not be honored. Dates on all claims must correspond with semesters for payment.

**MEDICARE-ELIGIBLE RETIREES ENROLLED IN APPROVED HMOs** — NYC Local 246 will prepare the second half of 2012's reimbursement payments for those Medicare eligible retirees currently enrolled and/or who have opted to purchase their drug rider through deductions in their pension checks. In order to receive reimbursement from the Retirees Welfare Fund, eligible retirees must forward to the Union Office copies of their pension stubs for the period of July 1-December 31, 2012.

**2013 UNION MEMBERSHIP CARDS** — Active members received their 2013 cards with their January newsletter. Retirees will get theirs in a separate mailing once their dues have been paid. Any active member who did not find a card with their newsletter should contact the office.

# DEP EQUIPMENT MAY BE HARMFUL TO MEMBERS

**While the City of New York's former Department of Environmental Protection had issued its own report on Sanitation, Disease Prevention and Hygiene, immediate concerns raised by Local 246 in regard to members potentially being exposed to dangerous raw sewage are not being addressed expeditiously now that members have been consolidated into the Department of Sanitation.**

President Joe Colangelo said that the Union has identified numerous DEP vehicles that could potentially be exposed to raw sewage, including the Flusher Truck Series comprised of 39 vehicles, the Basic Truck Series with 50 vehicles, the Fork Lift FRK Series, Jet Rodders, Hydro-Jet Rodding and Vactor Trucks (also known as Super Suckers). Since Local 246 members work on these vehicles daily, Colangelo said the Union is concerned for their health and wants to know what is being done to remedy the situation.

When DEP was its own agency, members working on contaminated vehicles would remove and wash their special work clothing in washing machines provided at the facility that heated the water to 160 degrees. Now that DEP is a part of Sanitation, those special washers and dryers are no longer available. Colangelo said that in order for a washing machine to heat water to the required 160 degrees, the machines themselves need to be industrial units. None of this was taken into consideration during the consolidation.

Sanitation is now looking to install washers and dryers at each location where DEP vehicles will be serviced. This may also become an issue in the Department of Transportation, which will be towing the vehicles.

"These are just some of the issues of fleet consolidation that were not thought out very carefully," Colangelo said. "All the City will publicize is that fleet consolidation saved so much money. They conveniently overlook the safety aspects that the Union has, and the costs associated with addressing them properly."

In the DEP's Policies and Procedures manual, it clearly states the importance of ensuring that, "DEP employees have access

to appropriate sanitary facilities and are advised of good hygiene and other work practices appropriate to the location(s), tasks, and biological hazards encountered in the workplace to prevent or minimize injuries and illnesses from these hazards. It is also intended to provide guidance for employees that work in close proximity to sewage (e.g., workers who enter sewers) and to describe DEP's approach for informing employees who perform outdoor duties that involve risk of occupational exposure to mosquitoes (West Nile virus), ticks (Lyme disease) and other vectors that transmit diseases such as, Hepatitis, Tuberculosis (TB), and Giardia."

Colangelo said the manual states that the detailed procedure applies to all affected DEP employees who work in sewers or otherwise in close proximity to raw sewage or who are exposed to outdoor natural biological hazards. The question remains that if the employees are no longer under DEP jurisdiction, why did the City not immediately enforce the same safety regulations where the vehicles are now being repaired?

"There is nothing that comes before the health and safety of our entire membership. This is one of the main reasons we met with management and are working on forcing them to move quicker in coming up with a solution for members to have convenient access to washers and dryers at the shops," Colangelo said.

Additionally, the Union is trying to resolve the problem of Mechanics working on vehicles in unsafe locations. "Typically, Mechanics realize that the work environment is a dangerous one with all the heavy equipment. We always ask members to put safety first, but we have to be given the tools and space to do so. We will work

with management to resolve all the safety issues that have arisen lately. Our members come to work every day to maintain and repair thousands of vehicles. We do our jobs to the best of our ability, not always under the most ideal of situations. The least we can expect is that our members will be safe on the job. Managers would expect no less if they were doing the jobs themselves."

Colangelo said an additional labor-management meeting is being scheduled to address the concern of many members that they are not being spoken to in a professional manner by some supervisors. Many of Local 246's provisional workers feel they are not being treated professionally and that their jobs are in constant threat. This has led to low worker morale on the job.

"Labor and management need to work together to ensure a smoother transition and resolve outstanding issues that are placing the health and well being of members in jeopardy," Colangelo said. "The agencies are melded. We can't do anything about that. What we can do something about is the way our members are being treated and the less than desirable conditions under which they are working. We would hope that the agencies would be more proactive than reactive when it comes to issues and concerns that the union raises, whether health and safety, working conditions or how orders are relayed to members."

The Union is asking for a better level of communication between Supervisors and Mechanics; solutions to situations that can cause health problems, and safety issues.

# NY'S PRO-LABOR LEADERS

## COLANGELO TRAVELS TO ALBANY FOR LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

While the Governor's recent State of the State address made no reference to labor unions, and his budget proposal does not try to solve the fiscal crisis at the expense of hardworking men and women, President Joe Colangelo said it's still vital to keep in close touch with legislative leaders who are pro-labor in order to be sure nothing comes up down the road.

That's why Colangelo, along with several other New York City labor leaders, recently traveled to Albany to meet with two of the state's key labor proponents. Senator Martin Golden and newly appointed Senate Labor Committee Chairwoman Diane Savino both met with the group of union presidents to talk about issues for the 2013 legislative year.

"While we don't currently have any direct issues affecting Local 246, we do have some overall labor movement concerns," Colangelo said. "For example, the state's Binding Arbitration law is up for renewal this year and there is a concern that it might include language incorporating a municipality's ability to pay. Unions are skeptical about this type of language and how it will impact an arbitrator's ruling."

He said ability to pay was never a consideration in the past. Areas such as medical and pension contributions could be tremendously impacted if any wording in a new binding arbitration law is written to be against labor.

"If a municipality's ability to pay is all of the sudden taken into consideration and we can't get our medical and pension contributions, it won't matter what an arbitrator's ruling is. The whole scenario will equate to a hurdle we cannot jump," Colangelo said. "We will be watching all discussions in regard to binding arbitration and are counting on both Senator Golden and Assemblywoman Diane Savino to let us know as soon as they hear any rumblings of a discussion on the matter."

As of now, there are also no pending discussions on the state's Triborough Amendment, which allows terms of a contract to stay in effect if a contract becomes out of date and until a new one is negotiated. However, if the Binding Arbitration law is changed, the Triborough Amendment would most likely be next to follow.

Colangelo said there is a proposal that would allow the state to offer financial assistance in the form of some type of financial control board to distressed municipalities. While this would help municipalities restructure their debt and hopefully become solvent, the first thing financial control boards tend to do is freeze contracts. One only needs to look at Nassau County and New York City in the 1970s to see the devastating effects of such actions, or more currently, Buffalo with no teachers' contract for the past 11 years and no firefighters' contract for the past nine.



From left: Izzy Miranda, President of Uniformed EMT's, Paramedics and Fire Inspectors Local 2507 FDNY; Lobbyist Robert Ungar, Senator Martin Golden, President Joe Colangelo, Jose Gonzales, Lieutenant from Uniformed EMS Officers Union Local 3621 FDNY; and Faye Smyth, President of Uniformed Fire Alarm Dispatchers FDNY.



Senator Diane Savino with Colangelo.

Although no photo was taken, Colangelo also met with Assemblyman Peter Abbate's Chief of Staff.

# LABOR

## IN THE NEWS

### Sandy Aid Shenanigans

In a *New York Post* article on January 17, 2013, a portion of the article said:

"On Monday, Jersey's Senate expanded its "Project Labor Agreement" law to cover the kind of projects likely to need rebuilding post-Sandy. Under this law, only companies with workforces that are 80 percent unionized are eligible to do the work. That's a costly rule: Studies show that PLAs add anywhere from 18 percent to 30 percent to construction costs. Surely the point here is that the priority for state and federal dollars should be rebuilding in the most efficient and cost-effective way. When running for office, Gov. Christie identified PLAs as one more thing that made New Jersey too costly. Now would be an especially good time to repeat that point."

Al Hagan, President of the New York City Uniformed Fire Officers Association, responded by saying: "Only in the bizarre world of the NY Post Editorial Board would a PLA be considered to add costs. PLAs are agreements for specific projects that provide a lower hourly wage for skilled journeyman. We in the union movement need to educate the public or soon we'll all be involved in the billionaire (Murdoch, Bloomberg, Koch Bros., etc.) inspired 'race to the bottom.' The divide and conquer strategy seems obvious, first the puppet masters went after public sector pensions, now the wage level of the building trades. They will not be satisfied until everyone works for minimum wage!"

### Big Win for Labor in Chicago

A January 13 *Portside Labor* article reported the following:

By a unanimous vote on Thursday, Chicago's City Council passed one of the strongest "wage theft" laws in the United States. The move was hailed by labor activists, who've long complained that wage theft — not paying workers what they're legally owed — is one of the easiest crimes to get away with.

Wage theft encompasses a range of offenses, including unpaid overtime and hourly rates below the minimum wage, suggesting that refusing to pay wages that workers have earned is a form of robbery, rather than a mere accounting dispute. Recent years have seen increasing traction for campaigns to strengthen wage theft penalties and remedies. Those efforts have also inspired a counter-attack.

In 2008, the National Employment Law Project and a group of advocates and academics talked to around 4,000 low-wage workers in Chicago, New York City and Los Angeles. Two-thirds (68 percent) of the workers reported experiencing some form of wage theft in the past week. Researchers calculated that out of

an already-low average \$339 in weekly income, low-wage workers each lose an average of \$51 weekly in wages they earned but never received. That adds up to more than \$56 million per week among workers in the country's three largest cities. Under Chicago's new law, companies convicted of wage theft could have their business licenses revoked.

### Wisconsin Gov Wins a Round in Fight Over Union Bargaining

A federal appeals court on Friday upheld Gov. Scott Walker's law stripping most public workers of most of their collective bargaining rights. The decision does not undo a September ruling by a state circuit judge saying the law was unconstitutional as applied to school and local government workers and preventing much of it from being in effect. That ruling is under appeal.

### Get a Union: Get a Ticket to the Middle Class

From the AFL-CIO Website: We've said it for years. Because of the "Union Difference" — fair wages and better benefits for workers who belong to a union — unions are the ticket to the middle class. Even if you don't belong to a union, there is a spillover effect to the whole economy. In other words, when unions are strong, everyone benefits. But don't take our word for it, here's what *Time* magazine contributor Eric Liu says:

"The fact is that when unions are stronger the economy as a whole does better. Unions restore demand to an economy by raising wages for their members and putting more purchasing power to work, enabling more hiring." He adds that unions lift wages for nonunion members too, "by creating a higher prevailing wage."

Even if you aren't a member your pay is influenced by the strength or weakness of organized labor. The presence of unions sets off a wage race to the top. But here's the key phrase, "the strength or weakness of organized labor." While unions can start a wage race to the top, Liu also says, "their absence sets off a race to the bottom." Who benefits from that race to the bottom?

When labor is weak and capital unconstrained, corporations hoard, hiring slows, and inequality deepens. Thus we have today both record highs in corporate profits and record lows in wages.

That's why, as AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka points out, a strong union movement is so important to rebuilding the nation's middle class.





## CITY TIME TIMEKEEPING SYSTEM CAUSES PAYROLL HEADACHES

Ever since CityTime became the new payroll tracking system for the City, Local 246 has been dealing with a variety of issues to which there so far have been no solutions. The Union once again met with officials on January 16 to address these ongoing problems.

"There are all different types of timekeeping issues that arise during the course of a work day and the CityTime system does not allow for anything out of the norm to be taken into consideration. It's been a headache we've been dealing with for quite some time, so far to no avail," said President Joe Colangelo. "We will keep beating the drum until we can make them understand that payroll cannot be a single mold for all employees. There are all types of special situations that arise that need to be factored in."

Colangelo said that with electronic timekeeping systems, supervisors are not afforded the opportunity to deal with unique situations.

"Electronic systems are very rigid, they don't allow supervisors to take into consideration a one-time situation, for example, and adjust a worker's hours accordingly. There are always exceptions to every rule and if supervisors cannot deal with them as they occur, it can be quite disruptive to the workday," he said. "We will continue to work toward finding a solution."

## COLANGELO VISITS UPSTATE SHOPS

### CONCERNED ABOUT ELIMINATION OF DEP

Continued from page 1

contrary. The problem is that with the elimination of DEP fleet maintenance downstate, the control and supervision of upstate mechanics now falls under a separate DEP division, where there is no direct supervisor of mechanical equipment. Colangelo said there is a question of to whom Local 246 members report.

Colangelo said the Union is also concerned about the retirements of workers who have not been replaced and the depletion of resources needed to properly support the upstate shops.

"These shops cover a vast area and our workers maintain a wide array of equipment," Colangelo said. "We are staying on top of figuring out who our members report to. Between the fleet consolidation and the fact that the Upstate Supervisor of Mechanics has retired, we have a lot of uncertainty at Grahamsville and Ashokan. It's important to make sure our members have the resources and support they need to effectively get their jobs done."

## TAKE ADVANTAGE OF

# UNION'S INCOME TAX BENEFIT

Members who wish to take advantage of Local 246's income tax benefit must do so by April 15, 2013. The benefit is administered by the accounting firm of Wendel-Walowitz Associates, Inc. and is available to both Active and Retired members. Members will be able to file their returns electronically and will receive their refunds in about half the time of filing a paper

return. The schedule for 2013 is below. All appointments begin at 8:00 a.m. and will continue as long as needed. Anyone who cannot make it to one of the times listed below should contact David Walowitz at (212) 682-6003 to schedule an appointment at his office, 420 Lexington Ave., Suite 2737, New York, NY 10170.

**Kowalinski VFW Post #4: 61-57 Maspeth Ave.  
Maspeth, NY 11378**

Saturday, February 23 ♦ Saturday, March 9, 23

**Long Island Office: 68 South Service Road, Suite 100,  
(Regus Office Center), Melville, NY 11747**

Wednesday, February 27

Saturday, March 2 ♦ Monday, March 11

Wednesday, March 20 ♦ Saturday, March 30





# SHARE OF THE WORK FORCE IN A UNION

# FALLS TO A 97-YEAR LOW OF 11.3%

**The number of American workers belonging to labor unions fell sharply last year, sending the unionization rate to its lowest level in close to a century, according to a recent data report.**

A recent article in *The New York Times* details just how much trouble labor unions are in when it comes to retaining and recruiting members.

The number of American workers belonging to labor unions fell sharply last year, sending the unionization rate to its lowest level in close to a century, according to a recent data report.

The Bureau of Labor Statistics said the total number of union members fell by 400,000 last year, to 14.3 million, even though the nation's overall employment rose by 2.4 million. The percentage of workers in unions fell to 11.3 percent, down from 11.8 percent in 2011. That brought unionization to its lowest level since 1916, when it was 11.2 percent, according to the newspaper article.

Labor specialists cited several reasons for the steep one-year decline in union membership. Among the factors were new laws that rolled back the power of unions in Wisconsin, Indiana and other states, the continued expansion by manufacturers like Boeing and Volkswagen in nonunion states, and the growth of sectors like retail and restaurants, where unions have little presence.

"With all the attacks on labor and governors in the midwest doing everything in their power to eradi-

cate the movement, I am not surprised by the numbers," said President Joe Colangelo. "The numbers are definitely discouraging though and show why labor needs to stay united and stand strong in the face of adversity if we are going to prevail and reverse the downward trend."

The figures announced by the Bureau point to grave problems for the future of organized labor. The portion of private sector workers in unions fell to just 6.6 percent last year, from 6.9 percent in 2011, causing some labor specialists to question whether private sector unions were sinking toward irrelevance. Private sector union membership peaked at around 35 percent in the 1950s.

The report showed particular drops in union membership in two groups where unions have long been strong: local government employees and manufacturing workers.

Union membership showed sharp drops in Wisconsin, which passed a law in 2011 curbing the collective bargaining rights of many public employees, and in Indiana, which enacted a right-to-work law last February that may have prompted many workers to drop their union membership. Such laws prohibit requiring employees at unionized workplaces to pay union dues or fees. The Bureau's report showed that

**"This is exactly what Mayor Bloomberg is trying to do in New York City," Colangelo said. "He would like nothing better than to go down in history as the union busting Mayor. We have similar legislators in Albany as well who would love to see the elimination of the labor movement."**

union membership fell by 13 percent last year in Wisconsin and by 18 percent in Indiana — both unusually large numbers for a single year.

One labor economist said an analysis he conducted found that the number of government employees in Wisconsin belonging to a union slid by 48,000 last year, to 139,000 from 187,000, as many public sector workers evidently decided to quit their unions after the Republican-led legislature stripped them of most of their bargaining rights.

"This is exactly what Mayor Bloomberg is trying to do in New York City," Colangelo said. "He would like nothing better than to go down in history as the union busting Mayor. We have similar legislators in Albany as well who would love to see the elimination of the labor movement."

The Bureau said union membership in the public sector fell to 35.9 percent in 2012, from 37 percent the previous year. The number of government workers in unions fell by 234,000, as many teachers, police officers and others lost their jobs. There were 7.3 million public employees in unions, compared with seven million private sector workers.

The Bureau's report did find increased union membership in California, Georgia, North Carolina, Oklahoma and Texas.

Colangelo said with all that's transpiring across the country, it's more important than ever for labor to remain a forceful presence in Albany, letting anti-union leaders know they will not succeed and work with those who are pro-labor to get laws passed that will protect current rights.

"Our labor laws do not favor unions organizing," Mr. Spriggs said. "It would be one thing to say we're bellyaching, but the Republican Party is really being vindictive against unions, and employers campaign very hard against workers unionizing."

According to the report, North Carolina has the lowest unionization rate, 2.9 percent, followed by Arkansas, at 3.2 percent. New York had the highest unionization rate, 23.2 percent, with Alaska second, at 22.4 percent.

The bureau said that among full-time workers, union members had median weekly earnings of \$943 last year (about \$49,000 annually), compared with \$742 (about \$38,600 annually), for comparable nonunion workers.



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# ISSUES AT FDNY SHOP UNION ADDRESSES PROBLEMS

President Joe Colangelo recently met with FDNY Shop Steward Robert Lucey and toured the facility in order to see first hand some of the problems members are dealing with. Lucey brought Colangelo up to date on issues with some of the equipment, as well as difficulty members are having using the new lifts. He said that the new system does not leave enough access to the main electrical compartment of ambulances when they are raised into the air. The ground lifts at the old shop allowed more access as the vehicles were unobstructed.

"Although the fleet consolidation plan is complete and our members are at their new locations, problems are arising that were not taken into consideration, such as vehicles having enough access room for our members to properly and safely work on them," Colangelo said. "Members have been discussing the problem with Robert since it arose and we have been trying to deal with it from the Union."

Pictured from left: Auto Mechanics Anthony "Doc" Lintner, Spencer Nimmo, Robert Lucey (Shop Stew-



ard), Emmanuel Missud and John Cinarella, President Colangelo, and Auto Mechanics Michael Carroll and Chaitram Balkissoon.

REMEMBER OUR TROOPS & PRAY FOR THEIR SAFETY

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