

The Work Force

March 2013

Vol. 16 No. 3

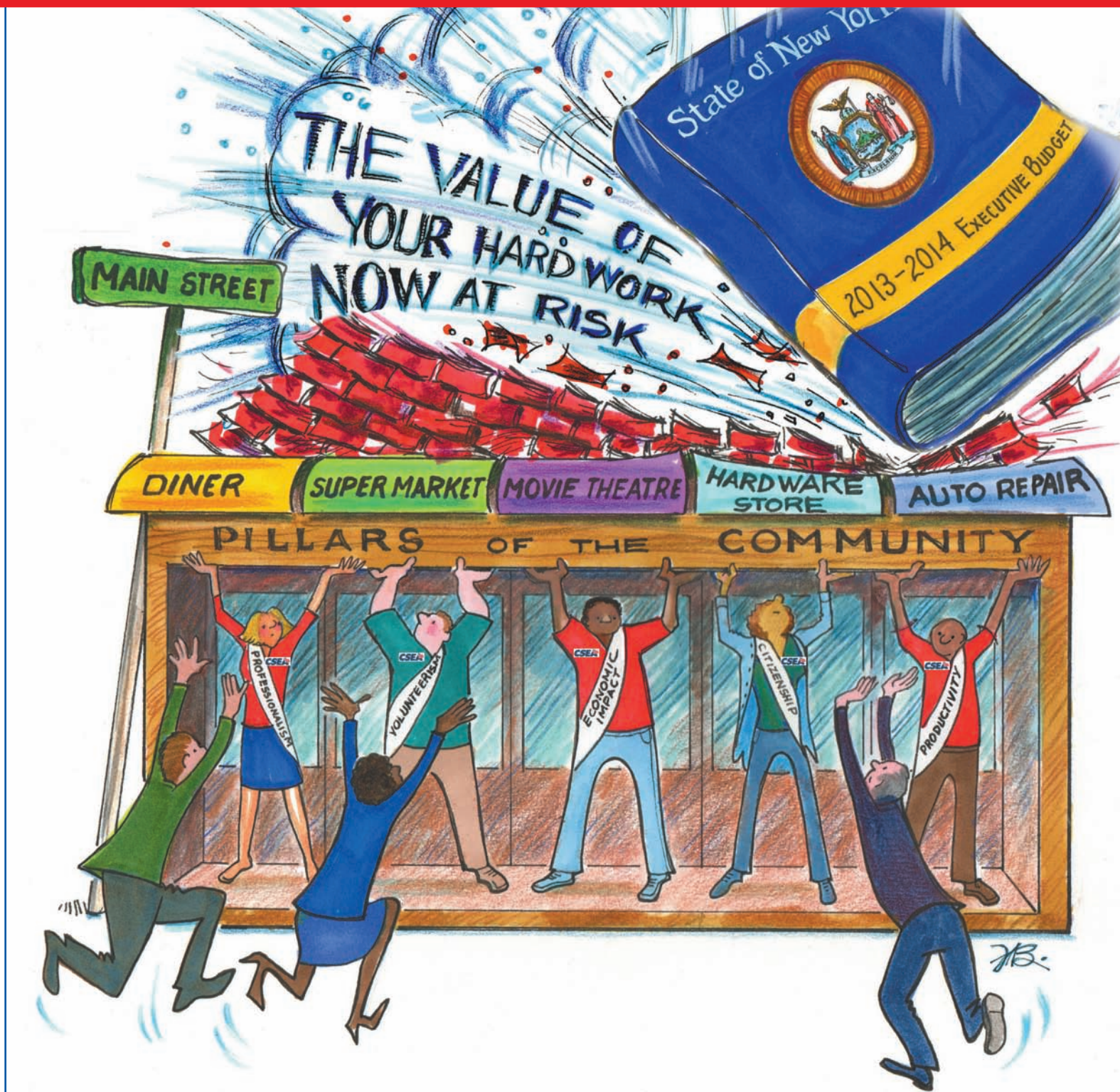


Photo of the Month



Photo by Chris Espejo

A caravan of state Department of Transportation snowplows from upstate New York wends its way through Long Island to help with snow removal from a major nor'easter that struck in February. See story, page 13.

Disability Insurance: protection from the unexpected

For more than 70 years, CSEA's special group insurance programs, offered through Pearl-Carroll and Associates, have provided CSEA members with peace of mind for meeting life's challenges. Disability insurance is just one example.

If you get sick or injured, Disability insurance helps pay for the costs of daily living – your housing, car payments groceries or anything else that you need.

All active CSEA members under age 65 are eligible to apply. Don't delay. Visit www.pearlcarroll.com today!

May 15 is deadline for submitting proposed resolutions, changes to CSEA's Constitution & Bylaws

Proposed resolutions and proposed amendments to the CSEA Constitution & By-Laws for consideration by CSEA delegates to the union's 2013 Annual Delegates Meeting must be submitted by May 15, 2013.

Proposed resolutions may be submitted only by a delegate and must be submitted on the proper forms. Forms for submitting resolutions are available from CSEA headquarters and region offices.

Proposed resolutions and proposed amendments to the Constitution and Bylaws must be submitted no later than May 15 to Statewide Secretary Denise Berkley, CSEA Headquarters, 143 Washington Ave., Albany, N.Y. 12210-2303.

The 2013 CSEA Annual Delegates Meeting will be held Oct. 21-25 in Lake Placid.

Canal, Thruway layoffs would hurt economy

CSEA is reaching out to the boating public to try to stop Gov. Andrew Cuomo from cutting jobs in New York's Canal Corp. that the union says will affect boaters as they try to enjoy the state's popular canal system this summer.

The union is also fighting nearly 40 job cuts at the Thruway Authority. CSEA represents many of the professional titles that Cuomo proposes to eliminate. Losing those jobs will have a direct affect on upstate New York's economic recovery.

Cuomo singled out the upstate economy in his State of the State address as a target for economic incentives to help revive manufacturing and bring back jobs.

The layoff of the Canal and Thruway workers was announced in late January, and CSEA President Danny Donohue was quick to respond, calling the layoffs politically motivated.

"Governor Andrew Cuomo needs to understand that threatening layoffs, putting dedicated workers out on the street and undermining the state Thruway and Canal operations is a lousy way to promote a jobs agenda," Donohue said. "The governor should stop blaming workers for every situation and knock off the strong-arm tactics. He needs to keep people

working if he wants any credibility on economic development."

The union has launched a public campaign and petition drive to put pressure on the governor to reverse the layoffs of more than 40 lock operators working for the Canal Corp.

The layoffs come at a critical time when major storms and flooding continue to threaten communities along the Mohawk Valley. Locks in some parts of the state require hands-on manipulation by skilled workers to control dam movement and regulate water levels. The intricacy of this work should not be underestimated.

"The canal system is an integral part of the tourism industry in upstate New York. The efforts made to put the canal on the front-burner and make it part of the economic recovery of upstate are significant. These layoffs would be counterproductive," said Dan Wiles of Mid-Lakes Navigation Co., which has a marina in Macedon.

— Mark M. Kotzin

The union is urging boaters and all CSEA members to visit www.change.org/petitions/stopnycanalcuts to send the governor a message opposing the layoffs.

Long Island Region activist killed on the job

YAPHANK — The state Public Employee Safety and Health Bureau and Suffolk County Police are investigating a Jan. 12 car crash that killed a CSEA activist.

Daniel Methven, 39, was working on his second job as a CSEA-represented school security guard at the Longwood School District. He had been traveling between school buildings when he lost control of his vehicle in Yaphank and it hit a utility pole and flipped over, killing him.

He was also employed as a

maintenance mechanic for the Town of Brookhaven, and served as secretary of the CSEA Town of Brookhaven Highway Unit. Methven was also a CSEA occupational safety and health activist, serving as a peer trainer.

Methven leaves behind a wife and four young children, the youngest of whom was 3 weeks old when Methven died.

"Our hearts go out to his family in their time of grief," said Long Island Region President Nick LaMorte.

Proposed state budget raises concerns across the board

ALBANY — There are many troubling areas in nearly every aspect of Gov. Andrew Cuomo's proposed \$142.6 billion state budget. CSEA is hard at work to make sure union members, state lawmakers and the general public understand what is at risk.

Public health care, State University of New York (SUNY) operations and local government funding all take a hit. State agency operations face further downsizing and consolidation and in some cases the very future of state services are in doubt.

"The governor is too quick to gloss over the negative impact of a flat budget, especially considering the cuts, closures, downsizing and upheaval over the past several years," said CSEA

President Danny Donohue. "While stressing economic development priorities, the governor also seems to forget that the erosion of public sector jobs also hurts people and communities and takes money out of the economy."

No increase in local government aid will only compound the challenges facing localities under the 2 percent property tax cap. There are also controversial provisions to tie specific aid to a competitive grant process connected with "efficiency" savings. There is a similar proposal for school

districts as well.

A shortchanging of the SUNY teaching hospitals will undercut Stony Brook, Upstate and Downstate Medical Centers and generally raise serious concerns about the future

of public health care. A proposal for a pilot project to allow for-profit hospitals in New York especially raises serious concern about the future of

Downstate Medical Center.

The governor's proposal in the "Close to Home" initiative in the state Office of Children and Family Services will transfer limited secure

juvenile detainees to programs operated by not-for-profit providers, leading to the elimination of more state jobs. Cuomo has already moved to close New York City-based state juvenile justice facilities by the end of March. In all, Cuomo's actions could result in 11 youth facilities being closed.

There are a number of vague proposals to consolidate services in state agencies to achieve savings, and CSEA continues to seek more detail.

CSEA is particularly alarmed by the direction and proposed budget for mental health and developmental disabilities services — they point to a doubtful future for state services and jobs. (*See related stories on this page and pages 9-11*).

CSEA is also furious over a proposal to raid the state and local pension system after the governor conceded that his misguided pension Tier 6 does not produce any immediate savings for public employers — a point that CSEA made repeatedly last year. The new proposal would allow public employers to underfund their pension obligations to put political expedience ahead of fiscal responsibility.

You can learn more about the state budget and what you can do about it at www.cseany.org.

Read more about the state budget impacts on pages 2, 4, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11 and 12.

"While stressing economic development priorities, the governor also seems to forget that the erosion of public sector jobs also hurts people and communities and takes money out of the economy."

— CSEA President
Danny Donohue

CSEA challenges state over shameful mental health budget

CSEA is pushing back hard over the proposed state budget for the state Office of Mental Health.

The union's analysis suggests the agency is in for some significant cuts and consolidations, but there is little detail and the proposal would give the agency the authority to act without any oversight or public input.

It's particularly outrageous because Gov. Andrew Cuomo and key lawmakers insisted during the vote on new gun control legislation that steps would be taken to ensure people with mental challenges get the help they need.

CSEA leaders expressed dismay to OMH

officials at a recent summit in Albany and the union is challenging state officials over inadequate mental health services and resources in a new ad.

"There are not enough mental health services in New York to match the need but the state continues to seek cuts in programs, facilities and funding without a plan for improvement. That will only ensure more pain and suffering no matter what politicians say they're doing to make things better," the message concludes.

THE WORK FORCE

ISSN 1522-1091

Official publication of
CSEA Local 1000, AFSCME, AFL-CIO
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Albany, NY 12210-2303
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The Work Force (USPS 0445-010) is published monthly by The CSEA Publication Office: 143 Washington Ave., Albany, NY 12210. Periodical Mail Postage paid at Post Office, Albany, New York 12288, and additional mailing offices.

Postmaster: Send address changes to: CSEA, Attn: Membership Department, 143 Washington Ave., Albany, NY 12210. CSEA on-line: The CSEA website can be accessed at www.cseany.org

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IN TOUCH WITH THE

Work Force

CSEA President Danny Donohue

You add value to your community

If we break down the impact of the proposed state budget, the bottom line is that it devalues the essential work that you and your CSEA brothers and sisters deliver every day.

The budget is full of code words such as flat spending, operational efficiency, consolidation, savings, reforms, streamlining, deferrals and delays, to name several. In many cases, what these really mean is that New York state will pay less and expect more. This is true for state operations and it's also largely true for local government and school aid.

It may sound good in a news release, and taxpayers are likely to applaud unless they actually think about what it means for them and their communities.

Don't get me wrong — we all want efficient government operations and more effective delivery of services. But when it's simply about paying less and expecting more, it's just a matter of time before the quality and range of services will decline, and that will impact real people in real places.

There is also the reality that smaller paychecks and fewer benefits will mean less income to spend in local communities — less money to spend in local stores and businesses. It's not good for the economy, and it's not good for the quality of life in our communities.

CSEA members add value to every community in New York. We will not apologize for our efforts to maintain necessary public services and help our members gain a decent standard of living.

When you earn a decent salary and benefits, it adds value to your work because you can better focus on your job. It adds value to your community because you can contribute as a volunteer and active citizen. It adds value to the local economy because you can spend your paycheck in ways that benefit a lot of businesses.



CLEANING UP AFTER A NATURAL DISASTER

Essentials:



Value of public services and workers cannot be taken for granted

Public sector workers across the country have been taking it on the chin in recent years, used as a scapegoat for increasing budget deficits and whose jobs are seen as areas that can save money if they are eliminated.

What's wrong with this reasoning? For one, it completely misses the point of value in public services and value in any jobs, be they public or private sector.

The media have done a good job of repeating the conservative argument that if public sector jobs are eliminated, the private sector will fill the void with jobs that will cost less for public sector employers. Yet there is no conclusive evidence that this is the case.

"Public sector employment is better for the economy than private sector employment in bad times. Why? In a nutshell it is because public sector jobs provide services to people who need them in a bad economy while also providing people with jobs,"

said Daily Kos commentator Robb Smith.

"These public sector workers are teachers, mental health workers, social workers, public works, firefighters, police, parole officers — to name just a few. If you think these folks are just hacks, then you must be able to afford private security, private fire protection, private schools, private health care options and generally choose to refuse to engage with the rest of society in any meaningful way (and stay off our roads — those are paid for and maintained by the public sector!)," Smith writes.

Smith makes a good point. Although the value of public sector jobs and services may be hidden from many of us as we go about our daily routines, it's only because that value has become assumed. We take it for granted that we will be taken care of by our towns, cities and states. Not until those services are taken over by for-profit corporations,

will we realize the error of our ways in letting the public sector disappear.

What's worse, a private corporation can choose its customers. Public service agencies cannot, which is healthy for a democracy because anyone in need will be treated equally by the government.

"Governments don't have that luxury. They must serve every citizen, providing essential services that in many cases would never survive in the private sector. Helping those who need it most. Protecting privacy and rights. Providing security and defense. All while balancing a complex mix of conflicting demands from a diverse constituency and in the face of unmatched public scrutiny," stated a report by Deloitte Research, ironically a conservative think tank.

So there is value in delivery of services, there is value in equal and fair treatment of anyone

needing those services, and, there is economic value. Public sector jobs are just that — jobs. Eliminate them, and you eliminate existing jobs with good pay and benefits, a decent living for families.

The public sector also provides millions of dollars in sales revenue to the private sector. Just look at the defense industry. The Army doesn't make its own tanks, it buys them from weapons manufacturers. Same with ships, fighter jets, coffee makers and forks for the mess hall. Compare this with goods and services consumed by state agencies, village boards and everything in between in the public sector, and you can see the economic engine that is created by providing public services.

The value of public service and its employment may be taken for granted, until those workers are no longer with us. Then, the value of public services will be very apparent.

Prison closure would harm workers, families

MANHATTAN — Bayview Correctional Facility, the state's last remaining women's prison south of the Tappan Zee Bridge and located in the city's tony Chelsea neighborhood, will soon close as part of the governor's budget proposal.

The prison's closure will mean that scores of incarcerated women will be further from their own homes and families.

Hurricane Sandy seemed to have accelerated the move since all the inmates and staff were evacuated to facilities north of New York City, including Beacon, Bedford and Taconic.

Beacon Correctional Facility, a minimum security prison in southern Dutchess County that also houses women, has also been slated for closure in the governor's budget proposal.

Bayview lies in a mandatory evacuation zone and sustained extensive water damage that has since been repaired. Nevertheless, few staff and even fewer inmates have returned.

Prison staff have noted that many of the women who remain at the other facilities have said that they haven't seen their kids in weeks, as visiting is too far and too costly for many families.

Bayview, a medium security prison with mostly well-behaved violent and nonviolent offenders, was also the state's only work release program for female inmates, which may leave inmates with little to no work release options as they near the end of their sentences. Some workers feared that there would be fewer programs for these women. There was also concern that their health needs weren't being adequately provided.

Since Gov. Andrew Cuomo came to office, nine correctional facilities have been closed. The state claims it's eliminating unneeded prison beds that will save the state money. It also claims that no jobs will be lost. Yet, the jobs that are available are further north, which may force many New York City-area workers into early retirement or to simply resign.

"There are no openings in most of the facilities downstate. You're forced to go north if you still want a job," said CSEA activist Juanita Green, who already worked at several upstate facilities and moved downstate about 20 years ago to settle down.

Located in a neighborhood where condos across the street from the prison are fetching upward of \$16 million or renting for \$10,000 a month, with high-end art galleries and across the street from the Chelsea Piers sports and entertainment complex, many wonder if the valuable real estate is the ultimate reason behind the closure.

In a 2012 feature on a condominium that rose up immediately next to Bayview, *The New York Times* cited state corrections officials as saying that the rumors of Bayview closing were not true.

"We need to find a way to keep Bayview open," said Green.

— David Galarza



Bayview Correctional facility located next to high-priced condominiums and apartments that cost more than \$10,000 per month.

Westchester Medical Center Unit deal approved

VALHALLA — Westchester Medical Center Unit members recently approved a three-year contract providing crucial job security language that will keep CSEA members working following several years of widespread job and program cuts.

The new agreement prevents any layoffs or outsourcing, including the reduction of full-time titles to part-time or per diem.

"In these uncertain economic times, unions are being scapegoated and paying the price

by way of layoffs and outsourcing of jobs," said Unit President Roger King. "It was time to work with management to resolve issues together, prevent additional layoffs and keep the CSEA work force strong and intact. This new contract's no-layoff language ensures job security for our members for the next three years. Eliminating the uncertainty of their employment status was a priority which we were successful in achieving."

In exchange for the strong no-layoff language,

members agreed to a wage freeze for the first two years of the contract, followed by lump sum payments in 2015 and 2016. They also agreed to an increase in the retirement age for members who began employment after Jan. 1, 2007, and to begin paying toward health insurance premiums.

— Jessica Ladlee

“Magic pill” tastes bitter for state workers

ALBANY — While the governor continues to tout consolidation as a magic pill to save money and increase efficiency, employees affected by such changes are dealing with confusion and lack of communication, despite the state’s promises to inform and consult with the unions.

Information Technology Services

In November, the newly created state Office of Information Technology Services (ITS) completed the transition of employees working in information technology titles, as well as those “substantially engaged” in information technology functions from state agencies. Titles in the Office of the State Comptroller, Attorney General, SUNY, State Education and the State Insurance Fund were excluded.

The impact on workers has been lessened, to some extent, by the fact that workers were not physically relocated, at least not yet. Workers continue to perform similar functions, many in the same office they had been working in, but under the auspices of ITS rather than their previous agency.

Business Service Center

Employees performing financial and personnel functions have a rougher road ahead. The transition of identified titles to the new Business Service Center is being launched in three “waves” with completion targeted for 2014.

New Business Service Center workers are being geographically relocated to Office of General Services offices in Albany and will now be under that agency’s umbrella.

To date, the bulk of these changes are in the Capital Region, but CSEA is examining the potential for impact in other parts of the state, especially as new consolidation efforts are identified or existing plans tweaked.

Regardless of work location, a move from one agency to another can be frustrating. Workers are concerned about seniority, promotional lists and changes in work schedules and agency specific benefits like flexible work arrangements. In many cases, the answers to employees’ questions are not readily available from the Governor’s Office of Employee Relations, despite CSEA’s attempts.

Laurie Dixon, previously a

State consolidations at a glance

Information Technology Services:

- **Most state employees working in information technology titles, as well as those “substantially engaged” in information technology functions are now under the newly created state Office of Information Technology Services (ITS).**

- **Titles in the following state agencies are excluded: Office of the State Comptroller, Attorney General, SUNY, Education and State Insurance Fund.**

- **To date, most new ITS workers have not been physically relocated from their previous agencies.**

Business Service Center:

- **State employees performing financial and personnel functions are in the process of being moved to the new state Business Service Center. The transition is scheduled to be complete in 2014.**

- **New Business Service Center workers will be relocated to the Office of General Services offices in Albany and will be under that agency’s umbrella.**

Parks & Recreation employee who recently transitioned to Information Technology Services, lost her place on two promotional lists. Dixon has filed a grievance on the issue.

“I could understand if I initiated a change to another agency, but I didn’t,” said Dixon. “My job hasn’t changed, yet now I have no opportunities for promotion. It’s very frustrating.”

While the state continues to beat the drum of consolidation, workers are asked to come along for the ride, but are offered little information.

CSEA Capital Region President Kathy Garrison has been working with members and officers to deal with the fallout. Garrison and other region officers, along with Capital Region Director Mike Sheldon, recently hosted a session for affected workers and officers.

“Increased efficiency and cost savings might be necessary, but the state needs to do a better job communicating changes that directly impact their employees’ lives,” Garrison said.

— Therese Assalian

CSEA fights Chemung Nursing Home sale

ELMIRA — Chemung County Nursing Facility supporters recently packed the Chemung County Legislative chambers as many people spoke before a legislative meeting to support keeping the public nursing home publicly owned and operated.

Up for vote at that meeting was a resolution to contract with a real estate brokerage to market the facility for potential sale. CSEA turned out many supporters. Several union staff members and community members spoke in support of the home. They warned the legislators what was at risk with privatization, highlighting Delaware County’s privatization of

its nursing home, which eventually closed last fall.

Despite the community opposition, the legislators voted unanimously to go ahead with marketing the facility’s sale. CSEA Central Region President Colleen Wheaton said CSEA will continue its efforts to educate the public about the perils of privatizing the nursing facility.

“We know that the quality of care will be diminished if the facility is privatized, and we won’t stop fighting on behalf of the residents and our workers who care for them,” she said.

— Mark M. Kotzin



Supporters of the Chemung County Nursing Facility fill the legislative chambers to show their opposition to privatizing the county nursing facility.

CSEA files suit over nursing home sale scheme

SYRACUSE — In the fight to save public nursing homes across the state, CSEA recently took a shot across the bow to stop counties from avoiding regulations and public scrutiny by transferring ownership of their public nursing homes to local development corporations.

In a lawsuit the union filed in State Supreme Court in Onondaga County, CSEA charged that Onondaga County lacked the authority to sell the Van Duyn Home & Hospital, the county's nursing home, to a local development corporation (LDC) last December, given that the facility was still necessary for public use.

CSEA also charged that the county violated the law by eliminating the facility's workers in the county budget, which was not only acting in bad faith, but also in violation of the county

charter.

CSEA has publicly contended that LDCs are unregulated shell corporations, lacking oversight and accountability to taxpayers, that allow municipalities to skirt regulations designed to protect taxpayers and to avoid public opposition to the sale.

"We are going to expose this illegal and improper scheme of using these corporations as holding companies to avoid proper public scrutiny and accountability," said CSEA President Danny Donohue. "Onondaga County can do better for the current and future residents of Van Duyn, let alone the people who care for them and county taxpayers."

Onondaga County's action is a glaring example of the disturbing recent trend where counties have flaunted legal obligations, circumvented normal open



CSEA Central Region President Colleen Wheaton speaks out in support of the county nursing home at an Onondaga County Legislature public hearing in fall 2012.

meeting requirements, and engaged in irregular bidding practices. Many of these actions appear to be attempts to minimize scrutiny and public input. CSEA is alarmed that these actions also seek quick political fixes at the long-term expense of seniors throughout New York. Several other counties are looking at using LDCs to sell their public nursing homes.

CSEA Central Region President Colleen Wheaton warned the Onondaga County Legislature during a public hearing last fall

over the transfer to the LDC that the union would take legal action to prevent them from abusing the law and improperly shedding their responsibility for the county nursing home.

"CSEA has tried to get local officials to do what's right by making our argument in the court of public opinion," Donohue said. "We will not hesitate to take our case to the judicial system whenever necessary."

— Mark M. Kotzin

Chautauqua County Home gets reprieve; fight continues

MAYVILLE – The Chautauqua County Home will continue to be the county's public safety net for at least one more month, thanks to strong union activism and county legislators who recognize the value of health care for all.

Legislators defeated a resolution in late January that would have allowed the home to be sold to a private profiteer from out-of-state. Legislators needed nine votes to stop the sale, and nine legislators stood up and did the right thing.

"The Chautauqua County Home

is truly a jewel in the community," said CSEA Chautauqua Unit President David Fagerstrom. "It must remain under the county's control and oversight so that county residents will be able to receive care regardless of their ability to pay or the complexity of their care."

Union officers and activists in Chautauqua County have been working non-stop for more than a year to keep the nursing home from being sold to a private company. Residents receive high quality care from a dedicated,

consistent staff. Turnover rates and care levels tend to suffer in private facilities and that is not good for the residents.

CSEA's fight continues. At press time, a resolution for a sale at the legislature's February meeting was a real possibility.

In other parts of the CSEA Western Region, other nursing home campaigns continue.

In Ontario County, CSEA activists supported a Feb. 5 town hall meeting addressing the importance of protecting the public safety net.

In addition to quality care, panelists discussed funding for nursing homes and Medicaid. Discussion also included horror stories from at least two public nursing homes that had been sold to private profiteers. In one case, the new owner failed and closed the nursing home, forcing residents to find a new source for their long-term care. In the second case, the panelist discussed the significant negative change in care and staffing levels at another recently sold facility.

— Lynn Miller

Fight for your jobs, or lose them

ALBANY — If CSEA members working in the state developmental disabilities system don't stand together and fight like never before, their jobs will go away.

That was the jarring message CSEA delivered in a letter to all 17,000 CSEA members who

work for the state Office for People with Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD).

"Your way of life and work is under attack and you may not even realize it!" CSEA President Danny Donohue warned members. "Governor Cuomo is moving OPWDD

into a managed care environment and looking to have more and more services provided by the private, non-profit sector." This means that the work CSEA members are doing will not exist in the future.

CSEA believes the governor is using a recent Supreme Court decision calling for ramped up deinstitutionalization as an excuse to erode the CSEA bargaining

unit through attrition. As the state system shrinks as workers retire, their jobs will go unfilled because developmentally disabled individuals will receive more and more services from community based, private providers.

The union charged the move is based, not over concern for quality of care, but strictly on dollars alone.

Having private agencies do the work is less costly on several levels, including wages, health benefits and pension costs. While the scheme may save the state some

money, it will have a devastating impact on families and communities. In the North Country community of Tupper Lake, for example, workers at Sunmount DDSO represent more than 20 percent of the work force, pumping \$23 million into the local economy each year.

CSEA representatives, including Statewide Secretary Denise Berkley,

"How do we go to work every day when we feel like our work won't be here in five years or two years? We know what the governor is doing and we want you to take a message to him that we are not happy."

"It's about our lives. I've got a son in the work force. I've got a daughter in the work force. I've got nieces in the work force. I can retire, I've got 33 years. They don't. They've got to get excited. They've got to get scared about this. My kids have kids. They can't live on \$20,000 a year."

— **Bill Loya, CSEA Capital District DDSO Local President on why CSEA members need to fight to protect decent paying, middle-class jobs.**



CSEA Statewide Secretary and former OPWDD direct care worker Denise Berkley tells OPWDD Commissioner Courtney Burke CSEA members won't stand for Gov. Andrew Cuomo's attempt to take away their jobs at a recent meeting with members of the CSEA OMH/OPWDD Advisory Committee in Albany.

met with OPWDD union leaders and activists in Albany last month to discuss the union's strategy to try to save state jobs. Afterward, they met with OPWDD Commissioner Courtney Burke and other top agency officials and took the opportunity to express their anger over the governor's plan.

'Feels like a setup'

"This feels like a setup," a fired up Berkley told Burke. "How do we go to work every day when we feel like our work won't be here in five years or two years? We know what the governor is doing and we want you to take a message to him that we are not happy."

A team of CSEA officials is developing what is expected to be a multi-year campaign to fight the governor's plan. They said the campaign's success will depend on member support and participation, and they recently kicked off

Continued on Page 11

State policies hurting quality of care at OPWDD

After vowing to help improve conditions for individuals living in group homes run by the state Office for People with Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD), some Cuomo administration policies are actually making things worse for people who live and work there.

Excessive overtime has been a longstanding problem at the agency where direct care workers are routinely forced to work double and sometimes triple shifts caring for individuals who require round-the-clock assistance.

"We have a lot of people that when they go to work, they don't know when they are going to go home," said CSEA Finger Lakes DDSO Local President and CSEA OPWDD Statewide Labor-Management Chair Kathy Button.

Overtime due to vacancies

The excessive overtime stems from an excessive number of vacancies throughout the agency due to OPWDD's inability to hire direct care workers in a timely fashion. "People are leaving faster than the agency can replace them," Button said. (See story, page 9)

The unfilled vacancies may be evidence of a conscious decision to downsize the state work force through attrition. Button said 3 ½ workers retire every biweekly payroll period, and every other payroll period another worker is terminated under Section 70.1 of state Civil Service Law for having been out of work longer than a year due to disability.

Adding to the problem are vacancies created when workers are terminated during their probation or placed on administrative leave for disciplinary reasons. Bad management practices, including forced

The excessive overtime stems from an excessive number of vacancies throughout the agency due to OPWDD's inability to hire direct care workers in a timely fashion.

disabled but have had the opposite effect instead.



CSEA member Veronica Robinson, a direct support assistant at the Snow Hill IRA in Syracuse, helps Gerry, one of the residents at her group home, put together a puzzle.

overtime and frequent reassignment of workers to different work locations, have led some employees to quit in frustration.

"OPWDD touts the fact that Finger Lakes hired 88 new workers last year," Button said. "But between retirements and the excessive turnover, it's a wash."

Lately, the situation has gotten worse, exacerbated by new state policies Gov. Andrew Cuomo promised would protect the developmentally

In spring 2011, The New York Times published a series of misleading articles alleging systematic abuse in the state developmental disabilities system. The articles inaccurately portrayed the majority of the 17,000 employees who care for people with developmental disabilities. Despite the fact that only a tiny fraction of workers had ever been brought up on disciplinary charges of any nature, let alone client abuse, the state overreacted to the articles and began imposing stiffer disciplinary penalties on workers, including suspending workers for minor infractions of procedure.



Button

"What used to be verbal or written counseling for something like forgetting to log your mileage when using a state van, instead of getting counseling, workers are sent home until an investigation is done," Button said. "That creates a hole that needs to be filled, and that creates more overtime."

Screening backlog

Another new policy requires that prospective employees must now undergo psychological screening as part of their medical certification. While the intent of the screening may have been to protect residents by ensuring workers were up to the emotional challenges as well as the physical demands of the job, the result has been to delay the hiring process, for months in many cases, while otherwise qualified candidates wait to be screened by state Employee Health Service doctors.

In labor-management meetings with OPWDD, CSEA has suggested creating on-site EHS offices, instead of making job candidates travel to a limited number of centralized locations, to help expedite the screening process. However, the state has yet to provide adequate resources. Button said Finger Lakes DDSO created such an office a year ago, but it remains unstaffed.

"There are people on the hiring list who have passed the civil service exam that when they finally get to them, they say 'sorry, I've already found a job,'" Button said. "People have to work to live. So if they get another offer in the meantime, whether it's for the state or for McDonald's, they take it."

— Ed Molitor



Oh the irony! At a recent meeting with members of the CSEA OMH/OPWDD Advisory Committee in Albany, OPWDD Commissioner Courtney Burke talks about improving employee morale while the agency proceeds to move work to private agencies and undermine the future for CSEA members and the communities where they work.

CSEA members need to fight for their jobs

Continued from Page 9

a series of local "Town Hall" meetings with members across the state to bring them into the fight. It will also be important to get the local community involved, as the change will have a devastating effect on the economy, especially across upstate New York.

While acknowledging that these are uncertain times, Donohue reminded workers that CSEA members have

successfully faced such changes in the past with the transition from institutional-based care to community homes.

"We have reinvented ourselves before," Donohue said. "Now we must all gear up to fight for a presence in a new OPWDD managed care system."

— Ed Molitor

Struggle to save SUNY Downstate continues

BROOKLYN — Minutes before a public hearing on the critical state of health care in Brooklyn, the SUNY board of trustees unanimously voted to shut down Long Island College Hospital.

The decision among the 12 voting SUNY board members present now authorizes Downstate to present to the state Health Department a plan for closing the hospital; the department will make the final decision.

“CSEA’s past warnings of unstable acquisitions and administration mismanagement has come to fruition,” testified CSEA Metropolitan Region President Lester Crockett at the hearing at Brooklyn Borough Hall.

“The comptroller’s audit noted, ‘The acquisitions of LICH and Victory Memorial with no financial analysis or future financial projections in the midst of known underutilization and recurring operating losses suggests an overall lack of leadership and governance.’ Given the absence of detailed fiscal analysis regarding major facility acquisitions, SUNY’s senior administrators need to be held responsible for its failure to stabilize



CSEA Metropolitan Region President Lester Crockett testifies before the state Assembly Health Committee that the economic benefits of SUNY Downstate Medical Center to Brooklyn and surrounding areas far outweigh savings from the teaching hospital’s privatization.

the hospital’s finances.”

One person who was grilled by legislators from the state Assembly’s Health Committee was the architect of

recent hospital closings, Stephen Berger.

“Hospitals are important, but hospitals are not health care,” said Berger, who authored a study that called for the closure of SUNY Downstate and several other health care facilities. “As painful as it is, we’re at a zero sum game. You have to take from some to give to others.”

Berger insisted that the present state of health care was inefficient and too costly. He said the future of health care was in moving toward a greater network of primary care providers, though he admitted that such a network currently does not exist to serve everyone, particularly poorer communities.

“Even though we have a fiscal crisis, we have a health care crisis and we need hospitals,” said Assemblyman Joseph Lentol.

SUNY Downstate is a critical component to the Brooklyn economy. SUNY has 8,000 employees, making it the fourth largest employer in the borough. Sixty percent live in Brooklyn, and 86 percent live in the five boroughs. These employees create more than \$2 billion in economic activity annually, leading to a \$12 return on investment for every \$1 that the state invests in SUNY Downstate.

Recent proposals to close inpatient services or allow a private operator to takeover operations at the facility would drain millions of dollars from the New York economy and add to the already high unemployment rate.

“Any recommendations of privatizations or closures are based on the assumption that before anything else happens we must cut these facilities to save the almighty dollar, even if it means putting the interests of the people of this state on the back burner,” said Crockett. “We will not and cannot embrace a plan that ignores the needs of New Yorkers who are most vulnerable and the public workers who serve them.”

— David Galarza

Freezin’ for a Reason in the Central Region

CSEA Central Region President Colleen Wheaton, third from left, joins about 50 other plungers from the Central Region “Polar Peeps” team in the frigid waters of Oneida Lake last December. The CSEA group was once again the largest fund-raising team at the event, exceeding their fund raising goal of \$15,000. Also pictured are Team Co-Captains Tammy Witteman, second from left, and Casey Walpole, fifth from left.



Public workers handle epic snowstorm

Hundreds of CSEA members employed by the state Department of Transportation and local highway departments worked around the clock at cleaning up from Nemo, the massive snowstorm that recently hit much of the state.

The hardest-hit area was eastern Long Island. Several Suffolk County communities saw snowfall totals in excess of 30 inches and practically the entire county wound up with more than two feet.

But Long Island, where numerous roads were closed and hundreds of cars and drivers were stranded, needed help to get conditions back to normal.

Nearly 1,000 workers, including hundreds of state DOT workers from across the state, the state Thruway Authority and other state and local government agencies, as well as more than a third of the state's snow removal equipment, including more than 400 snow plows and more than 100 snowblowers, loaders and backhoes, were sent to Long Island by Gov. Andrew Cuomo to help with storm cleanup.



Town of Brookhaven Highway Unit member Billy Peters removes snow from a road.

DOT workers help out

Department of Transportation Region 8 (Poughkeepsie area) Local President Chris Espejo had just returned home after two days of storm cleanup when his phone rang.

Espejo, along with a dozen workers from his crew, learned he was being deployed to Long Island along with other DOT workers to help with recovery efforts.

"I'd just gotten home around 9 p.m. and then we were back in at midnight, taking the left wings off of all the plows because we'd been told they wouldn't fit through the toll booths on the Throgs Neck Bridge," said Espejo, a supervisor based at a Putnam County residency. "We were on the road by 2:30 a.m. and after arriving, we were sent to close off 10 exits on the Long Island Expressway from Happaugue to Riverhead."

Espejo's crew worked an incredible 32 hours on the LIE, grappling with snow removal with the added challenge of thousands of abandoned cars littering the highway. Workers from that crew spent five days on eastern Long Island dealing with Nemo recovery, while CSEA members based at DOT



Department of Transportation crews from the Hudson Valley help clear the Long Island Expressway. (Photo by Chris Espejo)

residencies in Westchester and Rockland counties were not kept overnight, but responded back each day to assist.

Espejo's group is one of many that deployed from DOT facilities across the state. He expressed pride in his crew members, all of whom volunteered for the assignment.

"It was an incredible feat for them to have accomplished in 32 hours what they did," Espejo said. "We hadn't seen anything like this before."

Strong local efforts pay off

In Brookhaven, town highway workers prepared for the storm by getting ready snowplows and sand spreaders, as well as other necessary equipment and supplies. Once the snow started, workers cleared roads to keep them as safe as possible.

But this task proved near impossible in parts of Suffolk County, with snow falling at a rate of four to six inches per hour, which forced segments of the Long Island Expressway and other roads to close. Hundreds of cars and drivers were stranded on the Long Island Expressway during the fast moving storm.

Soon after the snowstorm had passed, town highway workers again cleared roadways to make them once again passable.

Largely due to CSEA members'

snow removal efforts, many of the affected Long Island roads were soon cleared and reopened.

"Priorities had to be established considering the sheer magnitude of the storm and the finite numbers of resources and personnel that could be applied to the effort," said Long Island Region President Nick LaMorte. "Even so, a situation like this demonstrates the true value of public workers and the positive effect they have in their communities."

— Jessica Ladlee and Rich Impagliazzo

"I want to personally say thank you to all CSEA members and other public employees who stepped up to the challenge. You add value to your communities every day!"

— CSEA President Danny Donohue

2013 CSEA ELECTIONS INFORMATION

Public Sector Local and Unit Elections

Private Sector Local Elections

Elections will be conducted for all Public Sector Local and Unit Officers and All Private Sector Local Officers

The term of office for all current Public Sector Local and Unit officers and all current Private Sector Local officers expires June 30, 2013. Public Sector officers and delegates will be elected to **four-year** terms. Private Sector officers and delegates will be elected to **three-year** terms.

Balloting for Public and Private Sector officers will be conducted between May 15 and June 15, 2013.

Each Local and Unit executive board must select its own election committee and Election Committee Chairperson, or Election Meeting Chair, if applicable (see box below). The Local and/or Unit Election Committee is primarily responsible for conducting the election.

Slating petitioning and slate voting will be an option for candidates for Local and Unit office (*see Page 15*).

Members may run as individual candidates if they wish to.

Note: *When circulating and signing individual and slate petition forms, members must write in their own CSEA ID numbers.*

ATTENTION: Public Sector Local and Unit Presidents, Private Sector Local Presidents

Did you send your Election Committee Data Form to CSEA Headquarters?

In early January, registered Election Committee Chairs and Election Meeting Chairs began receiving their election packages from CSEA to assist them in performing their election duties. This material is necessary for the Chairs to have to run a proper election.

Election packages will only be mailed to those Chairs where their Local or Unit President has sent in the required Election Committee Data Form (ECDF). CSEA Headquarters cannot send material and information to any Chairperson, without first receiving the completed ECDF from the Local or Unit president.

Inquiries regarding election committees may be directed to the CSEA Statewide Election Committee at 1-800-342-4146, ext. 1447.



Locals and Units with 150 or Fewer Members Holding an Election at a Special Membership Meeting

Locals and Units with 150 members or less may choose to appoint an Election Meeting Chairperson (instead of an election committee) and conduct an election at a meeting.

Holding your election at a Special Membership meeting simplifies the election process in that, where there are races (more than one candidate for an office), the Election Meeting Chairperson calls a Membership meeting for the purpose of electing officers.

Application for Office

Special election rules are available to Locals and Units of 150 or fewer members. In these smaller Locals and Units, completion of the Application for Election to Office replaces the requirement to obtain signatures on a nominating petition.

In Locals or Units with 150 or fewer members, any member who submits the application and meets election requirements under the appropriate Local or Unit Constitution will qualify as a candidate.

Break in membership affects eligibility for union office, voting privileges

A break in union membership status can have long-term future implications. Your membership status affects your eligibility with respect to:

- Seeking or holding union office;
- Signing nominating petitions for potential candidates;
- Voting in union elections, and;
- Voting on collective bargaining contracts.

Only members "in good standing" can participate in these activities. To be in "good standing", your dues cannot be delinquent.

If you go on unpaid leave or for any other reason have a break in your employment status, your dues will not continue to be paid through payroll deductions. You must make arrangements to pay your dues directly to CSEA to continue your membership status. If you are either laid off or placed on leave without pay status due to becoming disabled by accident, illness, maternity or paternity, you may be eligible for dues-free membership status for a period not to exceed one year. If you are called up for active military duty you may also apply for dues-free status.

Note, however, you must continue to pay dues to run for office. Dues-free or gratuitous membership allows members to continue their insurance coverage while out of work. It does not protect your right to run for or hold office. This does not apply to members who are on leave due to being called up for military duty. Members on active duty, upon return, are considered to have had continuous membership status for all CSEA election purposes.

Please notify the CSEA Membership Department at 1-800-342-4146, ext. 1327, of any change in your status and what arrangements you are making to continue your membership in CSEA.

2013 CSEA ELECTIONS INFORMATION

Public Sector Local and Unit Elections

Private Sector Local Elections

Important Information about Slate Petitioning and Slate Voting

Local Elections

In Local elections, a slate must contain a candidate running for the offices of President, one or more Vice Presidents, as set forth in the Local's by-laws, Secretary and Treasurer.

The slate may also include candidates for other offices that have been created according to the Local Constitution and by-laws. In Locals that have created the combined position of Secretary-Treasurer in their by-laws, the slate must include a candidate for that office.

Unit Elections

In Unit elections, a slate must contain a candidate running for the offices of President, one or more Vice Presidents, as set forth in the Unit's by-laws, Secretary and Treasurer.

The slate may also include candidates for other offices that have been created according to the Unit Constitution and by-laws. In Units that have created the combined position of Secretary-Treasurer in their by-laws, the slate must include a candidate for that office.

Candidates should know the following:

- A member cannot be a candidate for officer and for delegate on the same slate. An officer candidate must circulate a separate nominating petition in order to appear on the ballot also as a candidate for delegate. The member will appear on the ballot as a candidate for office as part of the slate and as an individual for the position of delegate.
- When circulating and signing petition forms, members must write in their own CSEA ID numbers.
- Candidates who run as a slate must complete a Slate Eligibility and Consent Form and a Slate Petition Request Form. By petitioning as a slate, candidates who appear as part of a slate need to submit only one set of the required number of signatures to qualify as a candidate. Individual petitions are not necessary for slate candidates.
- Candidates who withdraw from a slate must complete a Slate Withdrawal Form and return the form to their election committee.
- More detailed information about election slates will be available from Local and Unit election committees.

MEMBERS ONLY INFORMATION

LOCAL 1000



AFSCME, AFL-CIO

Legal Services Program

Workers'
Compensation and
Social Security
Disability

Personal
Legal
Matters

Personal
Injury
Matters

Taking Care
of Business/
Elder Law

Veterans
Disability
Benefits

This members-only benefit program provides attorney representation for Workers' Compensation, Social Security Disability, Personal Injury, Veterans

Know Your Rights!

Disability Benefits and Personal Legal matters including Taking Care of Business for members and their dependents. Quality legal representation at little or no out-of-pocket cost for injury/illness related matters; quality legal representation at pre-negotiated/discounted fees for other personal matters.

The Injury Related Program is administered by the firm of FINE, OLIN & ANDERMAN, LLP through its statewide network of offices. Personal Legal Services are provided by a closed network of specially selected attorneys dedicated to quality service for CSEA members.



1-800-342-4146

Call during normal business hours, 8 a.m. – 5 p.m., Mon.–Fri., and follow the menu instructions for the Legal Services Program

CSEA Headquarters, 143 Washington Ave., Albany, NY 12210

Web site: www.cseany.org (through the CSEA members-only portal)

Danny Donohue, President

Negotiation status of Empire Blue Cross/Blue Shield and East End Health Alliance

Empire Blue Cross/Blue Shield negotiates its hospital contracts on a regular basis with participating hospitals. To date, negotiations between Empire Blue Cross/Blue Shield and East End Health Alliance (EEHA), which consists of Eastern Long Island Hospital, Peconic Bay Medical Center and Southampton Hospital, have been unsuccessful.

Effective **April 1, 2013**, EEHA will become a non-participating facility with Empire Blue Cross/Blue Shield if no new agreement is reached.

Letters describing the

Health Benefits



problematic negotiations have been sent to Empire Blue Cross/Blue Shield

enrollees advising EEHA was scheduled to terminate effective March 31, 2013.

How does this affect the coverage of Empire Plan enrollees?

Effective **April 1, 2013**, only the following services provided by EEHA will be covered on an in-network basis:

- Cases of emergency.
- For continuation of care for

pregnancy. If you are in second or third trimester of pregnancy as of the date the hospital ceased to be a participating facility, you will continue to be covered through the delivery of your child and postpartum care directly related to the delivery.

- For any services that were pre-authorized.
- Inpatient services for an admission which occurred before the date the hospital ceased to be a participating provider.
- If no network hospital is available within 30 miles of your residence that can provide the services required.

• If a network hospital is not available within a 30-mile radius from your home.

If you choose to receive services at EEHA **on or after April 1, 2013**, except for the special circumstances listed above, the services will be covered as an out-of-network facility.

If you are currently receiving services from EEHA and have questions regarding your coverage or you would like an alternate list of participating facilities, please call Empire Blue Cross/Blue Shield toll-free at 1-800-495-9323.

April 30 is Empire Plan 2012 claims deadline

Empire Plan enrollees have until **April 30, 2013** (120 days after the end of the calendar year) to submit medical expenses that were incurred in 2012 to:

United HealthCare Service Corp.
P.O. Box 1600
Kingston, N.Y. 12402-1600

For the Empire Plan Basic Medical Program, the Home Care Advocacy Program (HCAP) and for non-network physical therapy or chiropractic services.

Empire Blue Cross and Blue Shield
NYS Service Center (Code YLS)
P.O. Box 1407 - Church Street Station

New York, N.Y. 10008-1407
For Empire Plan and for non-network inpatient and outpatient hospital services.

OptumHealth Behavioral Solutions
P.O. Box 5190
Kingston, N.Y. 12402-5190
For non-network mental health and substance abuse services.

Medco Health Solutions
P.O. Box 14711
Lexington, K.Y. 40512

For prescriptions filled at non-participating pharmacies or at participating pharmacies without using your New York Government Employee Benefit Card.

Enrollees can call the Empire Plan at **1-877-7NYSHIP (1-877-769-7447)** with questions or to obtain claim forms. As a reminder, when using the Empire Plan's toll-free telephone number, please pay extra attention to the choices offered by the automated system.

Network providers and pharmacies will submit claims directly to the appropriate insurance carrier on your behalf when provided with all necessary information. If you have a non-network claim submission, make sure you complete the requested subscriber information on the claim form, include the original billing or receipt (if requested) and don't forget to sign the claim form.

Empire Plan announces enhanced flu vaccine benefit

In response to the severe influenza epidemic, Gov. Andrew Cuomo has declared a public health emergency in New York state. The Empire Plan has amended its medical coverage to make it easier for enrollees who have not yet been vaccinated to do so.

Effective Feb. 1 to May 31, influenza vaccinations will be available without a co-payment when received at a pharmacy within United Healthcare's national vaccination program network.

Participating pharmacies are:

- CVS
- Rite Aid
- Safeway
- Target
- Walgreens

Vaccinations received at other pharmacies or administered by nonparticipating physicians will be covered under the Basic Medical component of the plan, subject to reasonable and customary charges

but not subject to deductibles or coinsurance. Enrollees who chose to be vaccinated at a nonparticipating pharmacy or by a nonparticipating physician will need to submit a claim for reimbursement.

For more information about this benefit, please call The Empire Plan toll free at **1-877-7-NYSHIP (1-877-769-7447)** and select the Medical Program. You can also go online at www.cseany.org for a printable flier.

Once you are at the website, rest your mouse on "CSEA Departments." Then rest your mouse on "Health Benefits Department" and click on "New York State Members." Click on "The Empire Plan Influenza Vaccinations" and there will be a link to a printable flier.

New York NOW In-depth news from New York's Capitol

Broadcast Schedule
'New York NOW' on New York Public Television (PBS)

Albany
WMHT | Fridays at 7:30 p.m.; Sundays at 11 a.m. and 11 p.m.

New York City
WNET | Saturdays at 11 a.m.

Long Island
WLIW | Sundays at 11 a.m.

Rochester
WXXI | Fridays at 9 p.m.

Buffalo
WNED | Sundays at 9:30 a.m.

Binghamton
WSKG | Sundays at 11 a.m.

Watertown
WPBS | Sundays at 7:30 a.m.

Plattsburgh
Mountain Lake PBS | Saturdays at 6:30 p.m.

nynow.org | Twitter @NYNOW_PBS | 'Like' New York NOW on Facebook

Watch New York Now on PBS

CSEA members are encouraged to watch New York Now, a weekly program focused on state government that airs on New York's public television stations.

CSEA is helping underwrite New York Now to help New Yorkers better understand the news being made in the state Capitol.

Procedure protects rights

AFSCME's constitution includes a rebate procedure to protect the rights of members who disagree with how the union spends money for partisan political or ideological purposes.

Article IX, Section 14 of the International Constitution, which establishes the procedure for dues rebates for members who object to AFSCME's partisan political or ideological expenditures, was amended at AFSCME's 33rd International Convention.

The amended language requires those persons who object to the expenditure of dues for political or ideological purposes submit their objection in writing to both the International Union and CSEA Local 1000 by certified mail between April 1 and April 16 (dates inclusive) each year for the prior year ending Dec. 31.

The timing of the steps in the procedure is tied to the International's fiscal year. The procedure, including the requirements for submitting a proper rebate request, is spelled out in Article IX, Section 14 of the International Constitution. THESE REQUIREMENTS WILL BE STRICTLY ENFORCED.

Here's how it works. Members who object to the expenditure of a portion of their dues for partisan political or ideological purposes and want to request a rebate must do so individually in writing. Written requests must be postmarked between April 1 and April 16, 2013. That request must be timely filed by registered or certified mail with: the International Secretary-Treasurer and the CSEA Statewide Treasurer. The requests must contain the following information: name, CSEA ID number, home address, email address, if available, and the AFSCME local (CSEA Local 1000) to which dues were paid during the preceding year. This information must be typed or legibly printed. The individual request must be signed by the member and sent by the individual member to: International Secretary-Treasurer at AFSCME Headquarters, 1625 L St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036-5687; and CSEA Statewide Treasurer, Empire State Plaza Station, P. O. Box 2611, Albany, N.Y.

12220-0611. Requests for more than one person may not be sent in the same envelope. Each request must be sent individually. Requests must be renewed in writing every year the member wishes a rebate.

Upon receipt by the International of a valid rebate request, an application for partisan political or ideological rebate will be sent to the objecting member. The objecting member will be required to complete and return the application within 30 days of its issuance. In accordance with the constitutional amendment adopted at the 1998 International Convention, the application will require the objecting member to identify those partisan or political or ideological activities to which objection is being made, and no rebate will be made to any member who fails to complete that portion of the application. In determining the amount of the rebate to be paid to any member, the International Union and each subordinate body shall have the option of limiting the rebate to the member's pro-rata share of the expenses for those activities specifically identified in the application.

Upon receipt by CSEA of the valid, certified request, the constitutional maximum of 3 percent rebate will be processed. No phone calls or e-mail correspondence will be accepted. Any member who is dissatisfied with the amount of the rebate paid by the International Union may object by filing a written appeal with the AFSCME Judicial Panel within 15 days after the rebate check has been received. Appeals should be sent to the Judicial Panel Chairperson at the AFSCME International Headquarters at the address listed above. The Judicial Panel will conduct a hearing and issue a written decision on such appeals, subject to an appeal to the full Judicial Panel. If dissatisfied with the Judicial Panel's ruling, a member can appeal to the next International Convention.

Do your CSEA EBF records need a checkup?

With spring fast approaching, what better time than now to do a little “spring cleaning” with your CSEA Employee Benefit Fund (EBF) enrollment records for your negotiated dental and/or vision plans?



both companies is essential. Failure to do so could result in claim payment on an individual(s) after they are no longer eligible. If this were

to occur, the member would be put into collections and would be responsible to satisfy those monies before future claims could be paid.

On this page are some examples of common eligibility issues and how to remedy these situations.

If you are transferring state agencies or change employers AND you are eligible for EBF benefits, please contact the EBF to verify dependent information. The member and dependent history on file remains the same until the member contacts us with updated dependent information.

The goal of the EBF remains to provide you and your family with the best possible benefits. For more information, please contact us at 1-800-323-2732 or visit our website at www.cseaebf.com.

Members are responsible for maintaining accurate enrollment information. Keeping enrollment information up-to-date can be done through a quick phone call or submitting supporting enrollment documentation to our Member Services Department. These actions can help rectify eligibility and claim errors for you and your dependents.

Many issues arise when there is inaccurate dependent information on file. It is very important that you notify the EBF with any changes to your family such as marriage, legal separation or divorce, or the birth of a child. The EBF does not share information with your health insurance carrier, so providing these updates to

Dependent children are eligible for coverage until age 19

Coverage for this dependent may be continued up to his or her 25th birthday if a full-time student. To qualify for continued coverage, the dependent must be full-time student enrolled for at least 12 undergraduate or six graduate credit hours in an accredited college or university working toward a formal degree. Once a year, the EBF requires the Proof of Student Status Form to be completed by the member and the school’s registrar’s office to continue coverage.

Again, this notification is separate from the health carrier’s requirements. This form can also be downloaded from our website following the “Download Forms” link or can be mailed to you directly.

A spouse is eligible for coverage unless legally separated or divorced from the member.

The member is responsible for removing a spouse from the plans if legally separated or divorced. If your spouse is no longer eligible for benefits, you must remove your ineligible spouse from the EBF and the health insurance carrier separately.

For the EBF, this can be done by submitting the “Remove Dependent Form.” It is available for download on our website at www.cseaebf.com, following the link “Download Forms” or you can call us toll free at 1-800-323-2732 to request a form to be mailed to you. When returning the form, include a copy of the legal separation documents or the first and last page of the divorce decree.

Please note that any claims incurred after the date of legal separation or divorce are subject to collections and are the responsibility of the **member**. If the member is put in collections no further claims can be paid until the collection is satisfied.

Almost time to retire?

Are you thinking about retiring? Ask your CSEA local president to pay the first year of CSEA Retiree dues, which is only \$24.

Our efforts, through the years, have protected – that is, guaranteed – public pensions and Social Security against assaults by shortsighted politicians who want to

dismantle the system that protects your standard of living.

These days, you can’t take anything for granted. You need your union to protect what you have and likewise, we need you to maintain strength in numbers. Dues are only \$2 per month can be deducted directly from your pension check.

Here is what you get in return:



- Lobbyists at the federal, state and local government levels to protect your interests;
- Membership in a CSEA Retiree Local, as well as AFSCME

Retiree Local 1000;

- Local retiree meetings to socialize and get updates on retirement benefits;
- Subscriptions to informative publications, including the CSEA Retiree News; and
- Member-only benefits that can save you money on many consumer needs.

Visit www.cseany.org and select “Retiree Members” from the “For Members” menu.

OTSEGO VICTORY — The Otsego County Board of Representatives' resolution to privatize the Otsego Manor Nursing Home was recently annulled by a state Supreme Court judge, who ruled legislators violated the Open Meetings Law when the board voted to privatize the home after going into executive session, with no previous announcement or public debate. The board's resolution to privatize the home was invalidated. The board would have to re-vote with proper public notice before it takes any more action to privatize the home ...

DONORS NEEDED — The American Red Cross has a shortfall of blood and platelets in New York due to blood drive cancellations because of winter storm Nemo and is asking people to donate blood and platelets. For more information or to schedule an appointment, call 1-800-RED CROSS (1-800-733-2767) or visit redcrossblood.org ...

LINDENHURST PACT — Lindenhurst School District Custodial Unit members ratified a three-year contract that includes annual raises and step increases. The agreement is retroactive to July 1, 2012 and expires June 30, 2015 ...

UNsung HERO — CSEA Central Region activist and State Executive Committee Chair Lori



Nilsson was recently honored with the Greater Syracuse Labor Council's Unsung Hero Award for her strong dedication to working families. "Lori Nilsson is so deserving of this award, and I couldn't be more proud for her," Central Region President Colleen Wheaton said. "She is truly an activist in every sense of the word, and she doesn't do it to get credit or recognition. CSEA and the labor movement are lucky to have her." ...

HARRISON DEAL — In Westchester County, Harrison School District Unit members voted overwhelmingly to approve a three-year contract that includes wage increases in each year of the new deal ...

SENECA IMPASSE — Contract negotiations for Seneca County's work force have broken down and CSEA has filed for impasse. The union will be mounting a public information campaign to promote the value of the workers' public services and fight for a fair contract ...

COCHECTON RATIFIES — Sullivan County's Town of Cocheton Unit members unanimously approved a three-year contract. The deal includes wage increases in each year of the contract, an increased uniform allowance and a new hourly stipend for members performing welder duties.



Food bank donation

Polla Milligan of the Food Bank of Western New York, left, receives a check for \$3,700 from Denise Szymura, Erie County Local Women's Committee chair. The committee raised the money through an auction basket benefitting the food bank, and local members are urged to make food or monetary donations to the food bank. Since 2004, the local and its Women's Committee have donated a total of \$28,215 and 4,161 pounds of food to the food bank.

Applications for CSEA's Irving Flaumenbaum Memorial Scholarship are now available by downloading at CSEA's website at www.cseany.org/scholarships or through your region office.

CSEA awards \$1,000 scholarships to three eligible dependents of CSEA members in each region each year. Flaumenbaum scholarship applicants are placed into consideration for the \$2,500 Pearl-Carroll & Associates and Met Life Insurance Company awards. The application deadline is April 30, 2013.

Getting healthy in Putnam County

CARMEL — CSEA members in the Putnam County Unit are reaping the benefits of the county's employee wellness program, a program that has grown by leaps and bounds thanks in large part to CSEA members Barbara Ilardi and Kris Boyle.



CSEA members Barbara Ilardi, left, and Kris Boyle help host a documentary screening for county workers on the dangers of obesity and heart disease.

Ilardi and Boyle worked with the county's new health commissioner, Dr. Allen Beals, to host two employee screenings of the HBO documentary "Weight of the Nation," an eye-opening film focusing on how childhood obesity can cause heart disease and other serious health conditions in later life. Workers were allowed to attend the screening during the workday. Beals said his department's proactive approach makes sense, as studies have shown wellness programs contribute to improvements in workers' health.

The county has offered free classes for county workers in yoga, self-defense, Zumba and Pilates. They've also overseen a walking program with prizes for participants and also sponsor regular hypertension and cholesterol screenings.

Ilardi, the county Health Department's supervisor of health education, planning and evaluation, and Boyle, a health educator, said plans for additional lunch-hour wellness programs are in the works, including a class in healthy food preparation techniques.

— Jessica Ladlee

Kumor is PEOPLE Recruiter of the Month

Kevin Kumor of the Erie County Local in the Western Region is the PEOPLE Recruiter of the Month for December. He recruited 22 new PEOPLE members.

"PEOPLE is a source of CSEA's political strength," Kumor said. "Through PEOPLE, CSEA is able to fight to protect health care and pensions. We are able to have an impact on issues important to working people and our families. PEOPLE membership costs just a few cents per day, but those few cents are an investment into our futures."

CSEA's PEOPLE program protects and improves our jobs, benefits and pensions in Washington, Albany and in your community. Your support and participation in PEOPLE strengthens CSEA's clout in the workplace, in the legislature, in your community and in the labor movement.



Kumor

— Lynn Miller

THE Work Force

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Published by CSEA

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