



Labor Fax

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A Year of Challenges and Triumphs for New Jersey's Labor Movement

By Charles Wowkanech & Laurel Brennan

As 2014 draws to a close, we pause to reflect on the year's trials and triumphs. Though New Jersey's labor movement faces many budgetary, legislative and political challenges, we remain committed to pursuing a progressive legislative agenda that benefits all working families.

Our solidarity and strength helped us achieve some noteworthy successes in a difficult environment. We pulled together early in the year to draft a unified plan to address pressing labor issues and extend our reach directly into our communities. Our Strategic Planning Committee deserves credit for crafting a road map to guide the State Federation, its Central Labor Councils, affiliated unions and community partners to meet the tests ahead.

Our commitment to build a foundation of strong communities made great strides with the opening of our first immigrant empowerment center in Hudson County, and first Youth Engagement in Solidarity (YES) group in Passaic County. These grassroots community-focused, community-based partnerships will help all working families. Our coordinated efforts also resulted in passage of "Buy American" legislation, record labor candidate victories, and the state's first-ever automatic yearly adjustment to the minimum wage.

The philosophy that knowledge creates power is evident in everything we do -- the WILD conference, youth engagement, online activism, Common Sense Economics and the labor candidates' school. This is a theme that will continue to carry us forward.

This is a tumultuous time for working families, especially the many thousands in Atlantic City and beyond who have lost their jobs or are unable to find work. It is only with our collective spirit, progressive vision and unwavering commitment that we will successfully confront the challenges. With your continued support, we will keep up the fight on behalf of all workers and their families.

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YEAR-END EDITION

Labor 2014: A Year of Historic Firsts

First Labor Candidate...

- Brother Donald Norcross, IBEW 351 became the first labor candidate to represent our state's working families and shared union values in Congress.

First African American Congresswoman from NJ...

- Labor champion and progressive fighter Bonnie Watson Coleman was elected to Congress, making her the first African American woman to represent our state in the U.S. House of Representatives.

First Full Senate Term...

- Senator Cory Booker was elected to a first full-term in the U.S. Senate, reinforcing the progressive leadership that our delegation brings to Washington.

Best Labor Candidate Win Percentage...

- As part of the labor candidates program, 35 out of 45 union members won election to public office in 2014. This year's 78% win percentage was the highest of all time. A total of 815 election victories have been achieved through the program since it began in 1997.

And More...

- This year's electoral victories are a testament to the strength and solidarity of the state labor movement and an unrivaled political program made possible through the unified efforts of Central Labor Councils, Building Trades Councils, affiliates, progressive community partners, thousands of volunteers, and State Federation staff.
- Labor 2014 by the numbers: 4,745 volunteers recruited, 94,872 phone calls placed, 291,725 union doors, knocked on, 993,000 flyers distributed, and 180,930 pieces of mail sent.



1998
Labor Fax
APEX Award

Empowering Labor's Next Generation

Young workers groups are an essential investment in the future of our labor movement. These groups are dedicated to recruiting, engaging, mobilizing and educating young workers on current events and the importance of unions. They will echo the sentiments of our brothers and sisters before us of fairness, equality and justice for all. The first group in New Jersey was formed under the auspices of the Passaic County Central Labor Council. The group, Passaic County YES (Youth Engagement in Solidarity), has begun conducting monthly meetings and recently launched its own Facebook page.

Public Employees Fight Back

This was another year of Gov. Christie attacking public employees to boost his credibility with the Koch Brothers. You name it, Gov. Christie threw it at us: privatization, regulations gutting civil service, creation of the rubber stamp benefits task force and his comical summer "no pain no gain" tour. Through the New Jersey State AFL-CIO Public Employee Committee, working with coalition partners, legislative leadership and media consultants, and coordinating a two-pronged legal strategy, we met every challenge head on. Privatization attempts were defeated, civil service regulations were struck down and the state budget included the full payment required by Chapter 78, prior to Gov. Christie breaking his own law by line item vetoing it, sending the state credit rating into a downward spiral. Through our coalition efforts, we will remain vigilant.

Standing with Atlantic City's Workers*Rebuilding on a Foundation of Good Union Jobs*

The closure of four out of 12 casinos in Atlantic City has caused the loss of 8,000 jobs across all sectors of the labor movement and sent shockwaves through the local economy. Businesses are suffering due to reduced gaming traffic, and the city's budget has reached a breaking point with officials calling for mass layoffs of police, fire, and city employees. The state AFL-CIO will continue to stand with our brothers and sisters and join with all stakeholders to support good union jobs and businesses which build a stronger more sustainable community. We continue to believe in the potential of Atlantic City and that in our diversity there is strength.

We Are One New Jersey

The We Are One New Jersey Hudson County Center officially opened for business on October 1, 2014, in Jersey City. The center provides assistance to legal immigrants to apply for U.S. citizenship, prepare for the citizenship test, and understand their rights under current U.S. immigration law. By empowering these community members, we can strengthen our democracy and ensure that all segments of our society have the ability to participate in the political process. Plans to open another center in Union County are currently underway.

Upcoming Events

March 6-7, 2015	12th Annual WILD Conference New Brunswick, NJ
June 16-17, 2015	Legislative/COPE Endorsement Conference Atlantic City, NJ
June 17, 2015	22nd New Jersey State AFL-CIO Labor Awards Atlantic City, NJ
August 8-9, 2015	19th Annual Labor Candidates School New Brunswick, NJ

For more information on any events listed, please check our online calendar at www.njafclcio.org.

**Earned Sick Days: A Win-Win for Workers
Businesses and Communities**

The state AFL-CIO has been vigilant in its advocacy of statewide earned sick days. The U.S. is one of the only industrialized nations without a uniform earned sick days policy. We have joined with Working Families United for New Jersey, Inc. to spearhead this initiative, allowing workers to balance their job with their health, reduce the spread of illness in the workplace and schools, and boost employee morale and productivity. The WILD conference pioneered an innovative training program for 150 union sisters providing them with the tools to lobby legislators on earned sick days. We were proud to work with building trades unions to amend the bill to address the needs of construction unions. The bill was released by the Assembly Labor and Budget committees.

Replenish the Transportation Trust Fund

The State Federation is working with affiliates and lawmakers to advance a credible plan to fund the state Transportation Trust Fund (TTF), lobbying to increase the gas tax, testifying before multiple legislative committees while opposing the consolidation of transportation administrations. An announcement from the Governor's administration is expected early next year.

Made in America Equals Jersey Jobs

We secured bipartisan passage of "Buy American" legislation in the Senate and Assembly by partnering with the USW, American Manufacturing Alliance, along with labor legislators and bill sponsors Senate President Stephen Sweeney and Assemblyman Joseph Egan. "Buy American" bills are on the Governor's desk and would be a common sense step towards a middle-class jobs recovery.

Affiliate Victories

- Approximately 420 Registered Nurses at Inspira Medical Center in Woodbury voted overwhelmingly in favor of union representation with HPAE.
- At Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital in Somerville, 430 registered nurses voted 204 to 170 to join the USW overcoming the objection of hospital management.
- JNESO nurses at Saint Michael's Medical Center in Newark ratified a contract that guarantees safe staffing ratios and prohibits shift cancellations, maximizing the efficiency and effectiveness of patient care.
- RWDSU 108 finalized two first contracts – one for 125 crossing guards in Union City, NJ and another for 30 crossing guards and violation officers in Guttenberg, NJ. Furthermore, workers at the Pilot-Flying J Truck Stop and the attached Subway restaurant in Bloomsbury won representation with RWDSU Local 108.

News and Events

- Hosted the 2014 Legislative/COPE Endorsement Conference at Caesars Atlantic City; honored Assemblyman Thomas Giblin; George Brestle, President of Calvi Electric Co.; and Joyce Alston, President of BCTGM 53 at the 21st Annual New Jersey State AFL-CIO Labor Awards.
- Hosted the 11th Annual Women in Leadership Development (WILD) conference, teaching participants how to counter the “war on women” through our unions and how to expand solidarity and women’s leadership roles.
- Launched an integrated video program to highlight the activities of the state labor movement and to support legislative, political, and union campaigns.
- Unveiled a redesigned New Jersey State AFL-CIO website that includes cutting-edge mobilization tools, improved navigation, and social media interactivity.
- Recognized by the state Senate for working last year to successfully increase the state’s minimum wage. Based on the consumer price index the minimum wage will be further adjusted on January 1, 2015, to \$8.37/hour.
- New Jersey’s unions held their first ever “Common Sense Economics” training to develop transferrable knowledge and actionable tools that put workers in the driver’s seat to changing the direction of this economy.

Solidarity Actions

- Over 20,000 faculty and staff at Rutgers University are currently in negotiations and working without contracts. We continue to support our brothers and sisters as part of the “Reclaim Rutgers” campaign to urge the school administration to bargain in good faith, address student debt and tuition affordability, and recommit the university to its core academic mission.
- Joined in support of the national Black Friday protests of Walmart, to demand a living wage and economic fairness and to stand up to the greed of the world’s largest private employer.
- Engaged over 500 supporters to message NJ Turnpike Authority Chairman James Simpson, urging him to oppose privatization of toll collectors’ jobs. Joined with our brothers and sisters at numerous commissioners’ meetings while working with labor elected officials, at all levels of our government, to pass resolutions in opposition to privatization.
- Joined in solidarity with the Bricklayers and Allied Craftworkers of New Jersey, to demonstrate against LCOR, which reneged on a promise to create union jobs with the \$800 million it received from California teachers’ unions to fund Montclair’s “Valley and Bloom Project.” We recognize AFT for standing in solidarity with these workers as we called on the CalSTRS pension fund to intervene.
- Rallied with CWA Local 1038 and its members, who are facing a contract battle with the Occupational Training Center (OTC) of Burlington County that threatens the ability of employees with developmental disabilities to afford vital health benefits.
- Joined with a coalition of business groups, labor unions, and state legislative leaders to call for the long-overdue and immediate filling of nearly 500 empty jobs at the region’s ports, and reforms to the Waterfront Commission of New York Harbor.
- Rallied with hundreds of food service and non-instructional workers at Newark public schools, who are represented by Workers United and have been without a contract for five years. Partnered with legislative leadership to pass a resolution urging the school administration to resolve the contract dispute.

Wishing you a New Year of Solidarity and Shared Economic Prosperity