



Labor Fax

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Solidarity Is Our Strength

By Charles Wowkanech & Laurel Brennan

We look back on 2015 as a year of significant accomplishments in advancing our progressive agenda and shared goals, reminding us that we can achieve important victories for working people when we work together as one.

Foremost among these achievements is our record number of victories on Election Day. With wins at every level of government, we now have 162 labor candidates serving in elected offices. The dedication of the CLC and BTC presidents, leadership in the locals and engagement of young workers contributed to our outstanding get-out-the-vote drive. This would not have been possible without labor solidarity.

We were also united in our fight for a strong economy. Together we mentored young workers in our first Statewide Young Workers Summit and facilitated Common Sense Economics training focusing on how to achieve economic justice for all. Balancing the pay scales was also the theme at WILD, the only labor women empowerment conference of its kind in the country.

Coordination with Working Families United for New Jersey, Inc., our community partners, resulted in passage of Statewide Earned Sick Leave in the Senate. We will continue to work in solidarity until every worker has this basic right. Partnering with We Are One New Jersey in Hudson and Union counties resulted in two thriving community centers helping legal immigrants become citizens.

Challenges lie ahead. *Friedrichs v. California Teachers Association* is a right-wing attack on public-sector unions that must be closely watched since the Supreme Court's decision could have significant repercussions for all unions. We will continue to fight for fully funded pensions and to replenish the Transportation Trust Fund so that our roads and bridges can be properly maintained and good jobs can be created.

We enter the New Year prepared to meet our challenges with a renewed sense of solidarity, and are optimistic that the voice of working people will prevail. We wish everyone a safe, healthy and prosperous 2016.

Labor Fax Co-Editors:

Charles Wowkanech
President

Laurel Brennan
Secretary-Treasurer

Associate Editors:

Angela Delli Santi & Lee Sandberg
(609) 989-8730 • www.njafclcio.org

YEAR-END EDITION

Labor 2015: New Jersey is Best In Class Thanks to You

This year's electoral victories are a testament to the strength and solidarity of the state labor movement. Not only were we able to expand our legislative majority by four seats, but we elected an unprecedented 49 labor candidates to public office this year, bringing the all-time victory total to 864. In a remarkable upset, Eric Houghtaling of IBEW 400 and his running mate Joann Downey unseated GOP incumbents, taking control of District 11 for the first time in 20 years. The labor candidates program has resulted in many firsts for the labor movement, and this year was no different. We thank the thousands of volunteers, both union members and allied community partners, who gave their time and energy to make these collective accomplishments possible.

Labor 2015 Program by the numbers:

- 7,651 phone & walk volunteers
- 287,090 doors knocked
- 293,000 customized fliers distributed
- 95,236 phone calls through LAN Predictive Dialer
- 304,356 pieces of mail sent

We're Still Innovating...

We introduced cutting-edge technology called MiniVAN to propel our labor walks into the future. The software allows volunteers to use their smartphones as an electronic labor walk packet. The consensus is that the program is easy and fun to use, and more efficient than the traditional paper packets because it allows more union households to be reached in a shorter period of time.

And Looking Toward the Future...

Much is at stake in the 2016 elections as we cast votes for President of the United States, U.S. House of Representatives, and an estimated slate of 63 incumbent and first-time labor candidates. We also anticipate several high stakes ballot questions concerning pension funding, North Jersey casinos, and the Transportation Trust Fund. Voter registration among our unions and community allies will be key to working families' success in 2016 and beyond.

All Sectors Unite In Fight Against Friedrichs

A U.S. Supreme Court case called *Friedrichs v. California Teachers Association* threatens to undermine the voice of all workers. The case is being spearheaded by the Center for Individual Rights (CIR), which is funded by the Koch Brothers and other greedy interest groups. Friedrichs is designed to erode bargaining rights by establishing public sector Right-to-Work (for Less), thereby enabling the repeal of pro-labor laws, such as prevailing wage, project labor agreements, and more. The New Jersey State AFL-CIO is leading the nation in the fight against Friedrichs through a pro-active communications and internal organizing campaign, targeting union leaders, rank-and-file members, community partners, elected officials, young workers and the general public. Our message is being disseminated through earned media, Facebook, Twitter, a series of videos, and online and print messaging.

“Common Sense Economics” Provides Tools to Level the Playing Field for Workers

“Common Sense Economics” (CSE) is a training program, designed and launched by the national AFL-CIO that is revolutionizing the way workers understand and respond to the economy. The takeaway is that our economic conditions are not like the weather, but are the direct result of a coordinated political agenda. Therefore, as workers, we have the power to come together and achieve an economy that works for all, not just the wealthiest one percent. The New Jersey State AFL-CIO is championing this empowering curriculum, having hosted seven trainings across our state, and sponsoring several young union members to become trainers. The New Jersey labor movement will be essential to achieving the national goal of training one million workers and community allies in CSE.

A Groundbreaking Year for Young Workers

The state young workers program is helping to build a more inclusive, enduring, and thriving labor movement. In a matter of months, this project transformed from an idea into one of labor’s most promising frontiers. Under the auspices of the New Jersey State AFL-CIO and affiliates, young workers established a 12-member statewide advisory committee with a network of over 250 supporters. Young workers have hosted five Common Sense Economic workshops, a statewide summit in Atlantic City, and a labor history tour at the Botto House. Our committee is recognized nationally and was invited to lead two regional meetings at the AFL-CIO NextUp Summit in Chicago. Approximately 567 young workers supported our Labor 2015 Get-Out-The-Vote efforts, accounting for a third of volunteers on Election Day. Through the labor candidates program, we elected young workers Brad Myhre, CWA 1036, as the Mayor of Frenchtown and Victoria Fisher, CWA 1037, to the Teaneck Board of Education.

Upcoming Events

March 4-5, 2016	13th Annual WILD Conference New Brunswick, NJ
June 20-22, 2016	29th Constitutional Convention Atlantic City, NJ
June 21, 2016	23rd New Jersey State AFL-CIO Labor Awards Atlantic City, NJ
August 13-14, 2016 (Tentative Dates)	20th Annual Labor Candidates School New Brunswick, NJ

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

Legislative Roundup

The New Jersey State AFL-CIO is actively engaged in 23 important bills. Highlights are below, and for a full summary, please visit our website’s current legislation page.

Pensions Constitutional Amendment - The State Federation strongly supports a ballot question to fully fund pensions. Workers and local governments have never missed a pension payment. Everyone continues to do their part to ensure the future of the pension system except this absentee governor, who abandoned his own law after just two years. Voters understand that the state must live up to its obligations to its workforce by providing the modest pension income workers have earned after a career in public service. A concurrent resolution (SCR-184/ACR-3) to place the question before voters in November is expected to be voted on before the end of the legislative session. It requires full funding to the various retirement systems after a phase-in and institutes a new quarterly payment schedule, allowing more time for state contributions to earn interest income.

Transportation Trust Fund (TTF) - The State Federation is working with affiliates and lawmakers to advance a credible plan to fund the state Transportation Trust Fund (TTF) before its insolvency in 2016. We are lobbying to increase the gas tax, testifying before multiple legislative committees, and working to support a Constitutional Amendment dedicating existing revenue that is not specifically earmarked for our transportation needs.

Statewide Earned Sick Days – A statewide earned sick days bill (S-785) was passed by the state Senate, marking a milestone victory in a campaign led by Working Families United for New Jersey, Inc., and its 256 grassroots coalition partners.

Affiliate Victories

- An historic contract reached between eight national unions and the American Red Cross applied to approximately 4,000 workers in 24 states. This agreement was struck despite a backdrop of financial and workplace issues, providing a strong testament to the collective bargaining process.
- IBEW 827 at Comcast soundly defeated the company's aggressive campaign to decertify the union. This victory was the result of a lot of hard work by union members and the IBEW 827 organizing team.
- IAM District 15's organizing team and workers at Penske Truck Leasing in Bridgeport, NJ, overcame an aggressive anti-union campaign to organize 24 Technicians and Customer Service Representatives.
- RWDSU Local 108 demonstrated that solidarity can and will prevail in our state by achieving an organizing victory for 30 drivers at Transdev, an international transportation company.
- Workers United Local 1528 ratified a new contract on behalf of up to 80 hourly employees at Nitta Casings in Bridgewater. The three-year contract includes a wage increase for workers and keeps their benefits intact.

News and Events

- Hosted the 2015 Legislative/COPE Endorsement Conference at Caesars Atlantic City as well as the 22nd Annual Labor Awards honoring state Senator Shirley Turner; Keith Mestrich, President and CEO of Amalgamated Bank; and Harold Daggett, ILA International President.
- Hosted the 12th Annual Women in Leadership Development (WILD) conference that drew record participation from young union sisters, as part of the goal to "carry the commitment forward" and empower participants to be champions of social and economic justice.
- Legislation establishing safe nurse staffing levels at hospitals and surgical facilities (A-647/S-1183) cleared the Assembly Health and Senior Services Committee. We will continue to advocate for this pro-patient bill.
- Congress approved long-term funding to cover monitoring and treatment for first responders who rushed to Ground Zero after 9/11 and subsequently became ill due to their heroic rescue and recovery work. NJ's representatives in Washington played a key role in the reauthorization of the James Zadroga 9/11 Health and Compensation Act.

Solidarity Actions

- Enlisted 500 supporters (and counting) to urge state legislators to approve a ballot question to fully fund pensions. Our Take Action campaign asks legislators to put the question to voters of whether the state should fulfill its obligation to 800,000 current and future pension recipients. We hope both houses of the Legislature approve the question before the session ends in mid-January. So, if you haven't sent the pre-written letter to your lawmaker, please do so by visiting www.njafclcio.org.
- Stood in solidarity with Atlantic City workers, still reeling from the casino industry consolidation that resulted in 8,000 layoffs last year and a city on the brink of financial disaster. In addition to advocating for job retraining and financial aid for the city, our actions focused on protecting workers at the Taj Mahal and Tropicana casinos from the underhanded measures undertaken by billionaire owner Carl Icahn. We rallied alongside hundreds of our brothers and sisters at UNITE HERE 54 to demand fair wages and the reinstatement of health and pension benefits and engaged our allies and community partners to keep Icahn's greediness in mind when booking conferences or events in Atlantic City. Our Executive Board adopted a resolution not to patronize Icahn-owned properties. We also urged our affiliates to continue to visit Atlantic City's other properties, and many rallied to the cause throughout the year.
- Engaged in a multi-component campaign to defeat federal fast track legislation. Our efforts included a rally day in Washington, a letter-writing/phone-calling campaign and meetings with members of Congress. While our effort ultimately was unsuccessful, we continue to fight against bad global trade deals like the Trans Pacific Partnership while advocating for good, family sustaining jobs here at home.
- Joined our brothers and sisters at IAM Flight Attendants and the Association of Flight Attendants-CWA to urge Congress to ensure that flight attendants, like pilots, get 10 hours of rest so that they can safely and efficiently perform their duties.
- Stood with IBEW and CWA as they conducted informational pickets and rallies during bargaining with Verizon Communications.

Wishing you a New Year of Solidarity and Shared Economic Prosperity