



# THE EAGLE

LOCAL 1103

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## Annual Retiree Luncheon - Fun, Food & Friends

*Retiring RMC President  
Pam Harrison and  
incoming RMC President  
Jeanette Spoor, kick off  
the Annual LMC  
Christmas Luncheon*



The annual 1103 Retired Members Club luncheon was once again celebrated at "The Reef" restaurant in Peekskill where banquet manager **Dianne Martin** and her staff helped insure that everyone not only had a great meal but also that everything went smoothly and without any hitches. A well attended group of retirees and their guests enjoyed the afternoon and shared a lot of laughs with each other. We were especially delighted to have **Mrs. Florence Wonsor** and **Mrs. Charlotte Bernard** join us for the afternoon.

**Pam Harrison** acted for the last time in her capacity as 1103 RMC President as she is turning over the reigns to **Jeanette Spoor**. With Jeanette vacating her Vice President's slot, **Andy Pecunia** has

graciously accepted to step in and fill her shoes. We regret to report that club Secretary **Ken Claussen** has been forced to resign his position for health reasons, but **Bunny Zukowski** will be taking over for him for now in a limited capacity. **Ed Christensen** remains our Club Treasurer, so if you haven't sent in your dues or want to join, send them to him c/o the Union Hall.

As outgoing RMC President, Pam spoke of how the retirees haven't seen a raise in 17 years. This is something that she has been fighting for since before she took over the club and has been quite vocal about this at Verizon's annual stockholders meetings throughout the country.

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# In My View . . .



This month I want to address the issue of work site closings. At this writing, Verizon intends to close many garages and other work locations throughout the state. We are witnessing the start in 1103 with the Carmel Garage. We cannot predict the future – and the company's plan has not yet been finalized. When they do, we will work on it and inform you ASAP. In addition, we brought the National Union in and they have been in contact with the company to insure that our Members' rights are protected to the fullest extent of the contract.

Some of you witnessed this when we stopped the immediate closing of the Carmel Garage in December when we invoked Article 52 of the Collective Bargaining Agreement which states that "The company will notify the Union at least six months in advance of planned major technological changes, which may affect employees represented by the Union...in order to give the Union the opportunity to discuss the impact of these changes..." Besides just adhering to the contract and learning what the company intends, we have offered to work with the company to make whatever changes they intend as palatable as possible to all concerned and offer potential resolutions and recommendations.

As you saw last month, the Local went back to its original "black and white" format. I mentioned this in the December issue as one of our cost-cutting measures while not cutting services to the membership. We will continue to do business while controlling spending at the same time. Your Executive Board takes great pride in being "one of the best Locals in CWA" and you can rest assure that pennies will never come before people.

Finally, I want to remind everyone that mobilization is an ongoing process, not just when we are bargaining for a contract. This post-bargaining mobilization includes keeping our legislators apprised of CWA's need, of Labor's needs and of working

men and women's needs in Westchester and Putnam Counties, in New York and Connecticut and across our country. This month we are asking you to tell New York State's legislators to take a fresh look that CWA is proposing to address the budget deficit – and finally not at the expense of the middle class. There will be other mobilization requests as President Obama sets his agenda and Labor sets its own. Washington will need to hear from us and we are counting on you to help deliver our message.

**JOSEPH A. BARCA, Jr.**  
President

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# The 1103 Political Page



by Chris Cutter, Assistant to the President

## Close the Budget Gap by Making the Rich Pay their Fair Share - Finally

The current New York State budget shortfall is \$2.5 billion and the state faces a projected budget deficit of \$12.5 billion in 2009-2010. The Governor is proposing steep cuts in education, healthcare, local assistance and state operations. Clearly, any solution will require shared sacrifice and cuts to popular programs, but working families should not have to bear the burden alone – like they always do. Real shared sacrifice will require not just cuts, but reform of New York's Personal Income Tax to raise sorely needed revenues.

### Tax Cuts for the wealthy cost \$8 billion a year

Over the last 30 years, New York has reduced income tax rates on the wealthiest New Yorkers by more than 50% and eliminated high income tax brackets so that working families and the very rich pay the same tax rate. These changes have resulted in a loss of \$8 billion of state revenue a year. While taxes for wealthy New Yorkers have gone down, their incomes have skyrocketed. The wealthiest 5% of New Yorkers have seen their shared total income explode by 24% over the last two decades while 80% of working families have seen their share shrink. Currently, New Yorkers making \$40,000 in annual income pay exactly the same 6.85% rate as almost 50,000 New Yorkers making over \$1,000,000 per year. (See chart "Today in New York")

### Why raise Income Tax on the rich?

The poorest New Yorkers now pay a higher share of their income in state taxes than the richest New Yorkers who have also

the spectrum of all income earners.

Look at the PIT chart that CWA supports. It shows that by just imposing a fair and very modest increase on the

Personal Income Tax Increases that CWA Supports (Source of Data: Fiscal Policy Institute)					
Income Brackets	# of Taxpayers	Rate Increase	New Tax Rates	New State Revenue	% of New Revenue
Above \$250,000	170,972	2.11%	8.25%	\$540,945,000	10.77%
Above \$500,000	61,340	2.12%	8.97%	\$665,786,000	13.25%
Above \$1,000,000	47,882	3.45%	10.30%	\$3,817,791,000	75.98%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>280,194</b>			<b>\$5.2 billion</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

benefited from former President Bush's federal tax breaks. New York State's income tax cuts for the rich have shifted the tax burden to middle and lower income New Yorkers through poverty, sales and other taxes and fees and this is disgusting. After decades of large tax cuts for the wealthy, NYS faces a very large budget deficit. No one enjoys tax increases; but the wealthy can easily afford it and now its time for them to step up to the plate. We cannot cut \$12 to \$14 billion from the NYS budget without dire consequences just to protect their tax breaks. Reform of the Personal Income Tax (PIT) can make New York's income tax more progressive and more fair and it can be done by slightly raising taxes on the very wealthy and better reflect

only New Yorkers that can afford it, we can close the budget gap by 5 BILLION 200 MILLION DOLLARS – and no one will suffer. Let your State Assembly and Senate Representatives know you support this measure and ask for their support on this common sense proposal. It will only affect the smallest percentage of tax payers – those who can afford it. (See statistics pertaining to 1103's jurisdiction by NYS Senate Districts.) We can close the New York State budget gap by 40%

### Today in New York

Your household earns \$40,000, your marginal tax rate = 6.85%  
 Your household earns \$400,000, your marginal tax rate = 6.85%  
 Your household earns \$4,000,000, your marginal tax rate = 6.85%

without hurting anyone – especially those that can't afford to be hurt anymore.

### Tax filers affected by State Senate Districts in Local 1103's jurisdiction annually

Senate District	# of filers	above \$1M		Percent \$500K-1M		\$250K-\$500K		Total Affected		Tax payers not affected (below \$250K)	
		Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
34 <sup>th</sup>	190,044	629	0.33%	826	0.42%	1,967	1.04%	3,422	1.80%	186,622	98.20%
35 <sup>th</sup>	125,674	471	0.37%	914	0.73%	3,063	2.44%	4,448	3.54%	121,316	96.46%
37 <sup>th</sup>	138,514	N/A	N/A	12	0.01%	76	0.05%	88	0.06%	138,426	99.94%
40 <sup>th</sup>	143,087	1,165	0.81%	1,632	1.14%	4,797	3.35%	7,594	5.31%	135,493	94.69%







## ***Dear Pam ... Thank You, Thank You, Thank You!***

Pam Harrison followed our founding RMC President Tom Wonsor and worked tirelessly to continue his efforts – and it showed. Our RMC has come a long way thanks to Pam. During her tenure, we have increased our membership three fold, established a website, send regular and informative newsletters, keep our Members alert to challenges to our benefits, and she made herself available either by phone or email.

One of Pam's primary goals was to keep retiree issues in the forefront at annual stockholder meetings where she challenged Ivan Seidenberg's hostile anti-retiree attitude. Every shareholder heard about the over-funded pension plan, yet retirees haven't seen a COLA in 20 years. She asked Ivan - and the press –WHY isn't this available to retirees and who is controlling all of this money? She was tenacious.

Always an activist, Pam became involved with local labor and national retiree organizations and is currently a voting Director and the Vice President of Labor Rela-

tions for the Association of BellTel Retirees, Inc.. She is familiar with our local, state and federal elected officials and because of her, the 1103 RMC is always welcome to their offices to discuss retiree issues.

She has also been a galvanizing force at the CWA conventions, insuring that retirees are kept in the forefront and are an integral part in CWA's collective bargaining. It was her hope to continue this fight at a different level, so she ran for President of the CWA District One RMC. At this writing we are waiting to see if the contested results will allow her to do so.

So Pam, on behalf of all the Members of the 1103 RMC, our best wishes for a long and active retirement knowing that your past accomplishments and goals will be continued by our next RMC President Jeanette Spoor.

**ANN ROUGHLEY**

***Assistant to the RMC President***

## ***CWA's Joseph Beirne Scholarship still available***

The CWA Joe Beirne Foundation was established in 1974 to honor the name and memory of the founding President of CWA, who served for more than 30 years.

Any member in good standing, their spouses, children and grandchildren (including dependents of laid-off, retired or deceased CWA Members) may apply. Applicants must be high school graduates or at least high school students who will graduate during the year in which they apply. Undergraduate and graduate students returning to school may also apply. Prior winners are not eligible.

Fifteen (15) two-year scholarship, to be paid at the rate of

\$3,000 annually, are awarded each year. Winners, selected in a lottery drawing, will also receive a second-year scholarship of the same amount contingent upon



satisfactory academic accomplishment. Part-time students (less than 12 credits) will receive half of the scholarship monies. No specific

studies are required. Scholarship winners may pursue whatever course they wish.

Applications are now being accepted and the **deadline is March 31, 2009**. Applications should only be submitted through the online application form. Go to [cwa-union.org/members/beirne](http://cwa-union.org/members/beirne) to apply. Then go to "Members Service" on the left and follow the prompts.

The Local 1103 scholarships will become available in the Spring and the applications and eligibility will appear in The Eagle.

**DOUGLAS SHEAHAN**  
**Secretary/Treasurer**

## **SCHOLARSHIP INFORMATION**

Watch for the **Local 1103 Scholarship Application** form in next months **Eagle**. 8 Scholarships totaling **\$10,000** will be drawn at the **June General Membership Meeting**.

# Labor Notes



*This editorial from the New York Times speaks for itself – and we thank them.*

There is no doubt that President Barack Obama has chosen a labor Secretary who could be a transformative force in a long-neglected arena. The question is where he will let her.

Hilda Solis, a United States Representative from Southern California is the daughter of immigrant parents with union jobs. She has been an unfailing advocate of workers' rights during eight years in Congress and before that, in California politics. Ms. Solis has been a leader on traditional workplace issues, like a higher minimum wage and an enhanced right to form unions. She also has helped to expand the labor agenda by sponsoring legislation to create jobs in green technology, and in her support for community health workers and immigration reform. Her record in Congress dovetails with the mission of the labor Department, to protect and further the rights and opportunities of working people. It also dovetails with many of the promises Mr. Obama made during the campaign, both in its specifics and in its focus on the needs of America's working families.

The main issue is whether the Obama administration will assert a forceful labor agenda in the face of certain protests from business that now – during a recession – is not the time to move forward. The first and biggest test of President Obama's commitment to Labor, and to Ms. Solis, will be his decision on whether or not to push the Employee Free Choice Act in 2009. Corporate America is determined to derail the bill, which would make it easier than it has been for workers to form unions by requiring that employers recognize a union if a majority of employees at a workplace sign cards indicating they wish to unionize. Ms. Solis voted for the bill when it passed the House in 2007. Senate Republicans prevented the bill from coming to a vote that same year. Mr. Obama voted in favor of bringing the bill to the Sen-

ate floor and supported it during the campaign.

The measure is vital legislation and should not be postponed. Even modest increases in the share of the unionized labor force push wages upwards, because nonunion workplaces must keep up with unionized ones that collectively bargain for increases. By giving employees a bigger say in compensation issues, unions also help to establish corporate norms, the absence of which has contributed to unjustifiable disparities between executive pay and rank-and-file pay.

The argument against unions – that they unduly burden employers with unreasonable demands – is one that corporate America makes in good times and in bad, so the recession by itself is not an excuse to avoid pushing the bill. The real issue is whether enhanced unionization would worsen the recession, and there is no evidence that it would. There is a strong argument that the slack labor market of a recession actually makes unions all the more important. With a united front, workers will have even less bargaining power in the recession than they had during the growth years of this decade, when they largely failed to get raises even as productivity and profits soared. If pay continues to lag, it will only prolong the downturn by inhibiting spending.

Another question clouding the labor agenda is whether President Obama will give equal weight to worker concerns – from reforming health care to raising the minimum wage – while the financial crisis is still playing out. Most members of his economic team are veterans of the Clinton administration who tilt toward Wall Street. In the Clinton era, financial issues routinely trumped labor concerns. If Mr. Obama's campaign promises are to be kept, that mindset cannot prevail again. The president's creation of a task force on middle-class issues, to be led by Vice President Joseph Biden and including Ms. Solis and other high-

ranking officials, is an encouraging sign that labor issues will not be given short shrift.

There are many non-legislative issues on the agenda for Ms. Solis. Safety standards must be updated: in the last eight years, the labor Department has issued only one new safety rule of its own accord; it issued a few others only after being compelled to by Congress or the courts. Overtime rules that were weakened in 2004 need to be restored. To enforce labor standards, the Labor Department will need more staff and more money, both of which have been cut deeply by President Bush.

Only the president can give the new Labor Secretary the clout she will need to do well at a job that has been done so badly for so long, at such a great cost to the quality of Americans' lives.

## Wal-Mart Ordered To Pay Workers \$54.2 million

Wal-Mart plans to pay out \$54.2 million to settle a class-action lawsuit brought by workers alleging that the world's largest retailer had them work off the clock and cut break time. Under the deal agreed to by the law firm representing the 100,000 current and former workers in Minnesota, Wal-Mart stores will also be required to maintain an electronic hourly wage monitoring system. The deal covers workers at both Wal-Mart and Sam's Club stores in Minnesota who were employed by the company from September 11, 1998 through November 14, 2008.

*Editor's note: If you someone who works for Wal-Mart, you might want to pass this on to them.*

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## **Madoff Scandall Hit's CWA 1103**

The Town of Fairfield's 1103 Emergency Communicators have been affected by the Bernard Madoff Scandal. The Fairfield pension fund, which manages the retirement money of the town's police officers, firefighters and municipal workers discovered it may have lost \$42million, or 14% of its assets, to the alleged Ponzi scheme. The fund had invested in Maxam Capital Management, a hedge fund heavily exposed to Mr. Madoff's operation.

Ken Flatto, the First Selectman of Fairfield, told the Financial Times, "We had always been given a lot of information. We totally believed it was a safe and conservative investment. In fact, only three months ago we got a memo from (Mr.) Madoff saying that he had moved all the

money into (US Treasury bills) to be even safer." The Fairfield pension fund had been one of the most well-funded in the country, with assets at 120% of liabilities in the middle of last year. With a big surplus, the town had not been required to contribute for several years. However, the fraud meant it was not only 95% funded and the town would have to start paying into the fund again, Flatto said.

Deputy Fairfield Police Chief Gary MacNamara says his department will investigate a fraud complaint filed by the town, while Town Attorney Richard Saxl says officials will pursue other legal actions to try to recoup as much money as possible, reported CBS radio 880 AM News. MacNamara says he expects police to apply for an arrest warrant

for Madoff when their investigation is complete. Madoff is currently being prosecuted in federal court in Manhattan. The 70-year old Madoff is accused of duping investors out of as much as \$50 billion in what may be the largest Ponzi scheme ever.

A Ponzi scheme is a fraudulent investment operation that pays returns to investors out of the money paid by subsequent investors rather than from profits and is named after its creator Charles Ponzi. We will continue working with Town of Fairfield officials to protect the interests of all of our Members affected by this illegal scheme.

**KEVIN SHEIL  
Vice President**