



# THE EAGLE

**LOCAL 1103**

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## **"1103 Members pay the price for achievement and progress"**



*"In order to continue winning working class battles, scenes like these must be repeated."*

WASHINGTON-Unions and their allies entered the Democratic-run 111th Congress in 2009 with high hopes for their legislative agenda. They didn't work out.

As the lawmakers staggered to a busy conclusion in ending their lame-duck session on Dec. 22 - after a 63-seat GOP gain in the November election gave Republicans control of the House next year - labor's record can be summed up in two contrasting phrases.

On issues such as the stimulus law and the Lilly Ledbetter equal pay law, where labor was part of larger coalitions, unions for the most part won what they sought, from extended jobless benefits to saving teachers' jobs.

But on labor-specific issues, the record was more mixed. With the Employee Free Choice Act heading the list - workers lost more than they won.

There were several causes for that record. The biggest one was the persistent and successful Senate GOP filibusters against virtually everything.

Labor could break through only when Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, D-Nev., and House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif. - and sometimes Democratic President Barack Obama created coalitions to overcome that roadblock.

And even then, workers did not get all that they wanted

or that their unions lobbied for. And the deeper Congress went into 2010, the tougher labor's road got.

For example, the first \$858 billion stimulus law had \$125 billion for infrastructure projects and millions more to save the jobs of teachers, Fire Fighters, police officers and other public workers in the depths of the Great Recession in 2009. AFSCME, the Fire Fighters and the Teachers campaigned particularly hard for that section of the stimulus.

But a second attempt, in summer 2010, to keep public workers' jobs funded - a \$ 100 billion package pushed by AFSCME and House Education and Labor Committee Chairman George Miller, D-Calif. - lost. Eventually, lawmakers approved \$10 billion.

Some, but not all, of the other results included: **WINS**

**TARP.** The much-hated "bank bailout" law wound up costing the government very little - and it saved at least 1 million jobs in the auto industry. The Obama administration decided to use the law, in turn with structured bankruptcies, to provide loan guarantees to the "Detroit 3" auto companies. Two of them, GM and Chrysler, took the guarantees, and the UAW agreed, with conditions.

*Continued on page 4*

**LABOR'S PROGRESS**   
..... pg. 1, 4 & 5

**Job Protection Vanishing!!**  
..... pg. 3

**Retiree Corner**   
.... pg. 7

**Remembering Dr. Martin Luther King**   
..... pg. 8

# In My View . . .



CWA Local 1103 is a Local that represents Verizon Technicians, Mechanics who work for Transervice Corp. working for Verizon, Technicians at Nyack Hospital and a host of other workers in public sector jobs. This article is dedicated to our Members in the public sector you know those who have "Government Jobs".

They are Para-Professionals in Bethel, Supervisors in the Town and Board of Education of West Haven, Sanitarian workers at East Shore, and Emergency 911 Dispatchers in Fairfield, Orange, and C-Med. All in Connecticut along with Library Workers at the Rye Free Reading Room in Rye, New York.

They are unfairly under attack and for the most part dumping on them is unfortunately becoming more and more commonplace. The shame in this is when executives in the private sector achieve huge compensation packages and golden parachutes very little attention is paid to them. Is it possible that all the financial woes of government are the fault of the public sector workers? I think not. It seems that the Right Wingers have many on their side advocating the idea that our Brothers and Sisters who work in these jobs somehow caused this crisis. Tom Pawlenty the Governor of Minnesota was quoted stating "Unions are taking over government and running it into the ground with oversized pay and benefits. Labor is bringing down government and crushing our economic recovery". The facts are the real villains are the people who created the "Financial Meltdown" in the first place. With the exception of Bernie Madoff when was the last time you heard or saw a Money Manager on Wall Street being dragged away in handcuffs?, or Real Estate Barons and Sub Prime Scammers being prosecuted? Big Money buys a lot of opinions and in 2008 the top 1% in New York City alone earned (using the word earned very loosely) 45% of the entire city's income.


Across the political spectrum lawmakers have given big business a free ride when it comes to our nation's trade policies, environmental protection, and real financial oversight, while setting our economic agenda.

Despite what the far right is touting government spending is a central part of today's economy and key to our recovery. Last year the U.S. Government accounted for 20% of all economic activity with 22 Million people working in Federal, State, and Local Government Jobs. Laying off or cutting pay will further devastate our economy and kill any chance of correcting the balance of our bargaining climate.

The Great Depression of the 1930's led to the creation of Unemployment Insurance and Social Security. It was an era that redefined government's role for society. Our Forefathers led the charge for our elected officials to improve the lives and to protect the ordinary citizens from the brutalities of the out of control "Markets". In order to move forward we must not let them water down our social safety nets and programs so many have sacrificed to establish, and we should not return to a time of brutal out of control markets. As of the writing of this article the Dow was headed towards the twelve thousand mark, Tax Breaks for the rich were forced down our throats and House Republicans are feeling the need to gut Social Security. Try to figure that out. The facts in my article were made possible in part from the December 2010 "Public Sector, Public Good" article by Mark Brenman and the David Sims article in January of 2011 "Public Sector, Labor Leader Roundtable".

In Solidarity,

Joey Barca Jr.  
President



## THE EAGLE

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## Regulatory Job Protection Vanishes for Telecom Workers

The Public Service Commission (PSC) announced it has formerly ended service quality regulation for Verizon for all but 4% of its landlines. Today service quality regulation exists only where lifelines and competition are not available.

To understand the importance of telecom regulation we must look back on the effect it has had on our jobs. A particularly good source of information is the May 2003 interim service report from the NYS Assembly's Corporations Committee. The committee, headed by then NYS Assemblyman Richard Brodsky, undertook an investigation pursuant to its responsibility to ensure telephone customers in NY are receiving adequate service under the NYS law and Public Service Commission regulations.

These statements below came from that report: "Verizon's service quality, and the standards imposed on it, have varied over time. Starting in 1995, the PSC imposed the Performance Regulatory Plan on New York Telephone, at a time when reductions in workforce and stagnation in capital investment had led to severe declines in the quality of service across the state."

"...when NYNEX merged with Bell Atlantic in 1997 the PSC required the Company, as a condition of merger approval, to hire between 750 and 1,000 new workers, spend(sic) an additional \$1 billion in its capital program..."

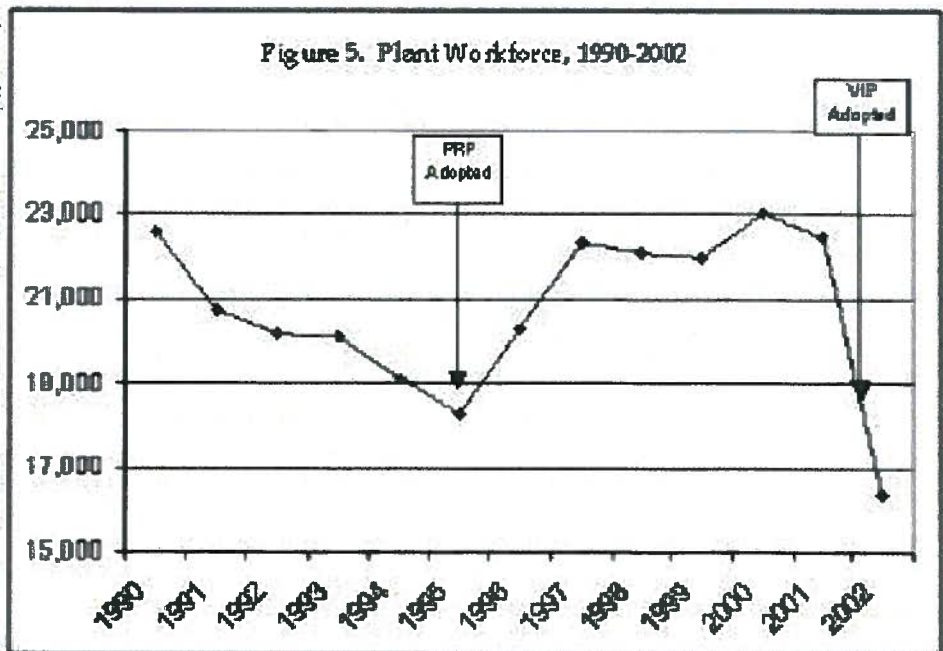
"...the hiring of additional plant workers during the life of the PRP greatly contributed to the improvement in service quality..."

"In February 2002, upon the expiration of the PRP, the PSC

implemented the Verizon Incentive Plan, which substantially reduced and changed the standards applicable to Verizon".

Brodsky also included this chart in his report showing Verizon's workforce numbers during the NY Telephone's Performance Regulatory Plan (PRP) and the Verizon Incentive Plan (VIP). From the chart we can clearly see that when stricter standards were imposed more jobs were created. In Brodsky's words, "Therefore, from 1995 until 2001, the size of the workforce increased by 23%, to over 22,000 plant workers. However, with the introduction of the VIP, the Company has cut its workforce by over 6,000 workers, or 27%, in a single year."

Two years after this report was filed, the VIP was further reduced by discontinuing the fines that were previously associated with missing customer service requirements. Today, 96% of all regulation that once provided a vital source for job security is gone.



Continued on page 6

## Labor's Progress ... continued from page 1

The results were a 2-tier pay system, with new hires earning half of what veteran workers get - with fewer benefits. GM went through bankruptcy, Chrysler was sold to Fiat and Ford - in better financial shape - refused the guarantees, but workers at all three, though far fewer than a decade before, kept their jobs.

**The stimulus law.** The stimulus law "saved or created" up to 3 million jobs, according to non-partisan sources. But most - including the teachers, Fire Fighters, police, social workers and local government workers - were saved. The \$125 billion in infrastructure funds produced thousands of construction jobs, and saved unemployment in the industry from skyrocketing even higher than its present one in five. But the stimulus funds are running out and those workers, public and private, are getting cut.

**Unemployment benefits.** Congress repeatedly extended federal jobless benefits, as high unemployment dragged on. It started in 2010 at 10% and was 9.8% in November. With more than 40% of the 15 million jobless having exhausted their 26 weeks of state benefits, Congress added federal benefits - but not before GOP filibusters halted the federal benefits several times. The final price for the latest extension, which runs through the end of 2011, was extending the Bush tax cuts.

**The Lilly Ledbetter law.** The first law Obama signed in 2009 restored the right of women, minorities and other victims of pay discrimination on the job to sue for back pay at any time.

The law was named for Lilly Ledbetter, a gentle grandmother from Gadsden, Ala., who had discovered her employer, Goodyear, discriminated against her in pay for 19 years. She sued and won in lower courts, but lost in the Supreme Court in 2007. The court said Ledbetter, and anyone else, had only 180 days from being hired to sue.

The law overturned that ruling. Ironically, Ledbetter suffered the discrimination because she was a supervisor and not covered by labor law. Rank-and-file workers at the Goodyear plant, she told Press Associates, don't suffer as much discrimination: They're covered by their Steel Workers contract.

**Health care for 9/11 workers.** In the lame-duck session, a multi-year effort finally succeeded in legislation to pay health care bills for more than 71,000 workers - some now dead - who suffer from their work on the ruins of the World Trade Center. The workers are ill with emphysema, rare cancers, mental problems and other problems due to their exposure to asbestos, toxic gases, particulates and more. But the program is only for five years, it's restricted to certain ailments, and less than \$5 billion was approved.

The 9/11 measure was one of two top causes the Fire Fighters pushed, since their members - along with Laborers, Operating Engineers, CWA members, Sheet Metal Workers and other unionists - toiled on "The File" for months, seeking remains and removing the debris.

**Airline issues.** AFA-CWA won when lawmakers ordered the airlines to provide anti-terrorist training for airline cabin crews. It also won when senators defeated a GOP attempt to overturn new union recognition election rules at airlines and railroads. AFA and the Transportation Trades Department had presented evidence to the National Mediation Board - which runs union-management relations at airlines and railroads calling for the new "majority of those voting" rules. WB adopted the rules.

**Mexican trucks.** Congress and the Obama administration sided with the Teamsters and stopped unsafe Mexican trucks from rolling over every road nationwide, as NAFTA - the jobs-losing trade treaty - calls for. But the ban may be temporary, applying only until Sept. 30. And a key backer, House Transportation Committee Chairman James Oberstar, D-Minn., lost his seat in the GOP landslide.

**Transportation officers' bargaining rights.** The Obama

administration, in late 2010, reversed a GOP Bush ban on organizing and unionizing airport screeners. Radical Right Sen. James DeMint, R-S.C. tried to stop the drive by inserting the union ban into a money bill, and lost. But in Dec. 2009, DeMint forced Obama to pull a Transportation Security Administration nominee who would not ban unions.

**Financial reform.** Labor led a broad coalition to tighten federal regulation on the big banks and other financiers whose shenanigans and frauds plunged the U.S. and the world into the Great Recession. The ensuing law includes a new consumer financial protection agency, rules on how to wind down big banks, measures guarding against "too big to fail," and a host of other measures tightening regulation.

The big disappointment for unionists was that many felt the legislation did not go far enough in going after Wall Street's crooks, locking them up, limiting their pay and perks and breaking up their institutions. And late in 2010, the GOP filibuster threat killed "earmarks" in spending bills - including one for \$35 million in legal aid to homeowners facing foreclosures by the big banks. A stimulus law program to help the homeowners stay in their residences is so hedged in with restrictions that it isn't working.

**Air Traffic Controllers bargaining.** The Air Traffic Controllers finally got a new contract, thanks to the Obama administration. Congress did not act on legislation ordering FAA to settle on a new pact with NATCA, but new FAA administrator Randy Babbitt did. He junked the 8-year Bush FAA effort to impose a contract on the 14,000 air traffic controllers that cut or froze pay and made working conditions worse. The new pact in 2009 undid many of the problems.

NATCA President Paul Rimaidi said the agency and the controllers are cooperating on other issues, starting with modernizing the air traffic control system, to make the skies safer. "We needed a contract in order to stabilize the workforce, stem the high attrition of experienced controllers and begin to rebuild the trust and morale essential to believing and sharing in the FAA's safety mission," he said. "Our contract is the framework and foundation upon which a formal collaborative relationship can be built."

**China.** Pushed by worries over migrating industrial jobs and strong Steelworkers lobbying, the House prodded the Obama Treasury Department to investigate if China's undervalued, manipulated currency is an unfair trade practice under world trade rules. The Senate did not agree. Obama is trying to pressure the Chinese. The administration won a trade case - constructed by the Steelworkers - against Chinese illegal trade subsidies on tires and just filed another case against "clean energy" breaks.

### MIXED

**Health care.** The Obama administration's health insurance overhaul was whittled down, from a health care overhaul, to get key Senate votes. In the process, government run single-payer health care - supported by 21 unions and approved by the House Education and Labor Committee - was killed. Its weaker cousin, the "public option," was dumped to get key swing Sen. Joseph Lieberman, Ind.-Conn.

And at the end to help pay for the law, people who buy so-called "hi-cost" health insurance will be taxed on its value over a minimum sum, starting in 2018 for unionists and 2014 for everyone else.

Union leaders - over screams from tens of thousands of members - backed that provision. The tax survived in the final law. Courts, now hearing GOP challenges, will decide if the law itself will survive.

Union leaders portrayed the health insurance law as a win. Workers "united in their commitment to bring the change our families, our communities and our country needs, earned this victory the old fashioned way: They worked for it," said Anna Burger, then Change To Win chair.

"It is because of their passion and their steadfast belief in doing what's right, that Congress stood and delivered the

Continued

change they demanded" that curbs the insurers' malpractice, 88,000 deaths due to denial of care and high profits.

**Broadband.** Enhanced broadband service was a particular cause for the Communications Workers' "Speed Matters" campaign. The Obama administration and House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., agreed. The stimulus law had \$700 million for broadband development. Efforts after that stalled.

"By building out high-speed Internet, the infrastructure of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, we'll create quality jobs and support economic growth," CWA President Larry Cohen said at a recent press conference. CWA lauded the Federal Communications Commission's Dec. 21 order stepping into broadband regulation.

#### LOSSES

**The Employee Free Choice Act.** A multi-million dollar business campaign and the planned Senate Republican filibuster doomed the Employee-Free Choice Act.

The bill would have helped level the playing field between workers and bosses in organizing and bargaining by writing majority sign-up (a.k.a. card check) into law, increasing fines for labor law-breaking, making court injunctions easier to get against chronic violators and mandating first-contract arbitration if the two sides can't agree within 120 days of starting negotiations.

Senate Labor Committee Chairman Tom Harkin, D-Iowa, could never get the 60 votes needed to overcome the filibuster threat. After several months of negotiations in 2009, Harkin put the issue aside, in favor of health care. House Education and Labor Committee Chairman George Miller, D-Calif., waited for the Senate to act. Since it never did, Miller didn't bring EFCA up.

**Public safety officers' collective bargaining rights.**

More than 20 states ban public safety officers from collective bargaining rights and one, North Carolina, bans public safety unions altogether. The Fire Fighters, who lost 343 members and their priest among the overall 3,000 people killed in the Sept. 11, 2001 al-Qaida attack, have made Us a top cause ever since.

The House has repeatedly approved the legislation, but the Senate GOP filibuster killed the bill - again - in the lame-duck session.

**FedEx workers' union status.** A decade ago, the Republican-run Congress declared that all workers for FedEx were "airline" workers subject to the tougher unionization rules and labor activity curbs of the law that covers rail and airline workers. By contrast, regular labor law covers workers for UPS, represented by the Teamsters.

The union has lobbied to get the FedEx rule repealed, in the law covering the Federal Aviation Administration. Tennessee's two Republican senators threatened to filibuster the FAA bill unless the repeal was dropped. FedEx, whose management is very Republican and anti-union, is headquartered in Memphis. The senators' threat won.

**Other equal pay laws.** Two other equal pay laws, one to update a 1962 federal act and put teeth in it, the other which would make it easier for workers to get and share pay information, got hearings on both sides of Capitol Hill - but nothing more. Obama supported them, too.

"Women's rights are ultimately human rights, and the march for equality will not end until full parity and equal opportunity are attained in every state and workplace across our nation," Obama said.

**Strengthening OSHA and MSHA.** After yet another coal-mine disaster in West Virginia, where 29 miners died, lawmakers got to work on strengthening the Mine Safety and Health Act, again. Labor and its allies seized that opportunity to add legislation strengthening the Occupational Safety and Health Act, which has seen little change in 40 years. They wanted to increase fines, make it easier to pursue violators and make accidents that killed workers into felonies punishable by high fines and jail.

Miller's House Labor Committee approved the merged MSHA-OSHA bill, but the Democratic-run House didn't come close to the two-thirds majority needed under a special "fast track" rule to pass it. The Senate never voted on the measure.

In absence of legislation, the new OSFU administrator, Dr. David Michaels, is stepping up enforcement, especially against the "worst of the worst" in the worst industries.

**The Dream Act.** Once comprehensive immigration reform died, the Obama administration, the Farm Workers, the Farm Labor Organizing Committee, and Hispanic groups pushed for the "Dream Act." It would provide green cards to undocumented young people brought to the U.S. at an early age, who graduated high school and enlisted in the military or went to college. It fell victim to a Senate filibuster.

**Transit money.** The Transport Workers and the Amalgamated Transit Union joined together to campaign for letting federal transit aid, in metro areas of more than 200,000 people, go for operating expenses - paying workers - as well as capital expenses - such as buying buses. Their argument was simple: "Why buy buses if you can't pay anybody to drive them?" They tried to get that provision into money bills. It fell victim to the Senate's decision, again due to the filibuster threat, to abandon regular money bills funding the entire government, in favor of a short-term funding bill through March 4.

**Green jobs.** The comprehensive energy and environment legislation that passed the House and stalled in the Senate included a large "green jobs" component. Unions calculated that federal support for such things as wind farms, hybrid cars, solar panels and more could create tens of thousands of high-paying factory jobs in the U.S.

Other jobs would have been created by the legislation's loan guarantees for nuclear power plant construction, a key cause of the building trades. But the legislation died when the key Republican, Lindsay Graham, R-S.C., withdrew his support, for other reasons.

**Infrastructure.** Beyond the money from the stimulus law, infrastructure funding stalled in Congress, or was killed by planned Senate GOP filibusters. The Laborers launched a large campaign in the fall election season to pressure senators especially Republicans - to approve a massive highway-mass transit jobs bill, and the other construction unions agreed. But lawmakers turned, again, a deaf ear.

"In the construction industry - a key driver of our economy - nearly 1 in 5 workers, or 1.5 million men and women, are jobless," Laborers President Terry O'Sullivan said after the election.

"Throughout our history, investing in building America has been a bipartisan mission," he added. "Our ability to compete is at stake while hundreds of thousands of workers who want to build our country sit idle. The best way for Congress to start to show America is their priority is to pass a fully-invested, 6-year surface transportation bill which would begin to put our nation back on competitive footing in the world, return millions of Americans to work and leave a lasting legacy."

**Postal funding.** The U.S. Postal Service ended fiscal year 2010 on Sept. 30 with an \$8.5 billion deficit and retiring Postmaster General John Potter campaigning for cutting jobs, closing post offices and eliminating Saturday services. The Letter Carriers led the campaign against those ideas, pointing out Congress could virtually end the red ink by repealing a Bush law forcing the USPS, at a cost of \$5.5 billion yearly, to pre-fund all health benefits now for future retirees, and ending an accounting gimmick that cost USPS another \$2.5 billion in workers' comp payments. Congress forgave that yearly health care payment in Sept. 2009, for fiscal 2010. NALC's and the Postal Workers' congressional allies tried to fix the problem in this year's funding bill for all agencies, too, covering fiscal 2011, which began Oct. 1. The GOP filibuster killed the funding bill - thus forcing USPS to fork over the money.

We now find ourselves in a quandary, how do we in this tough economy, with an unfriendly Republican led NYS Senate and an anti-Union, anti-regulatory Republican lead US House of Representatives, get regulatory protections back before it is too late.

The regulatory / job security fight will be wholly a legislative / political battle. We cannot win this in contract negotiations. If we want to work the 10-20 more years that we as members need to reach retirement, than we have to commit to fight on more than one level. We have to commit to the political arena as much as we do to the shop floor. On a global membership level, we have not made this commitment yet. We have come a long way, but we are not all stepping up and our job depends on it. Labor represents 19 million out of 154 million people in the American workforce today. We are small, but can become a tidal wave force that directs public policy like regulation, but only if we stand together. This is not a plea, it's recruitment.

If we are to bring back regulation and the many other principles that help keep labor working, then we have to take over the public policy conversation. To do that we need a party with the principles to recognize society cannot last if it is based on enormous economic inequality. It's clear, Republicans rarely listen to labor, they have their own agenda. Democrats, although supportive of Labor, tend to be as Jim Hightower an American Populist portrayed, "a Wheel barrel full of bullfrogs." You can get them from "A" to "B", you just have to keep stopping along the way to put them back in the bar-

rel. We need a party that listens and understands our language and that is focused on the principles of labor as the main answer.

The good news is we don't have to start from scratch to create this party, because it's already been done by some of the most powerful Unions in NY2. The Working Families Party has been fighting for workers' rights in the political arena for 13 years and its successes include providing the votes for the margin of victory for many labor friendly candidates across New York. The WFP is the real third party labor has been waiting for and with over 140,000 voters casting their ballots on the WFP

line for governor this year, they have moved from row "D" to "E" on the ballot, beating out the Independence party. That's real power that we need to protect our jobs.

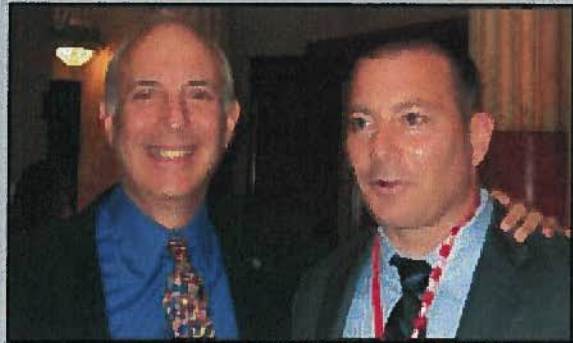
To advance the WFP to the next level and increase its ability to take control of the public policy conversation we need to do more than just vote on

their party line. We need to make their party our party. All CWA members and their families should consider joining the WFP as vital component in the fight for the 10- 20 more years we all need to work and retire.

If you would like to become a WFP member, you can get a voter registration form from the Union Hall or go to our website [cwa1103.org](http://cwa1103.org) for a link.

*Joe Mayhew,  
Business Agent*





*Vice President Kevin Sheil has been elected to serve on the CWA Local Plant Table at the upcoming Verizon contract negotiations. Kevin has proven himself to be well-qualified and results-oriented. We know he will be an asset to the CWA Bargaining Committee.*



## The Retiree's Corner..

**Brrrr! It's cold outside. We hope that everyone is staying warm this winter especially with 49 of the 50 states experiencing some type of snow fall. At our Holiday Luncheon, we were all toasty especially sitting by the fireplace at Antun's. During our luncheon, we held a 50/50 raffle. The winner was Steve Sheridan who retired out of 999 Nepperhan. The chapter's share of the 50/50 was donated to veteran groups that we support. We made a donation to the DAV, Disabled American Veterans, in memory of John Guaragno, the father of Diane Guaragno one of our members. John recently passed away and was a disabled veteran of WWII. We sent another donation to the USMC Wounded Warrior Regiment. The wounded Warrior Regiment helps Marine amputees returning from both Iraq and Afghanistan. Adjustments can be hard but these veterans will always be cared for by their fellow Marines and organizations like ours that support them. Our third donation was made to the S.S. Lane Victory Endowment Fund in memory of our founder and 1st President of our Chapter, Tommy Wonsor. Tommy served in the Merchant Marines during WWII. Tommy passed away in 2002 but his memory lives on in our chapter.**

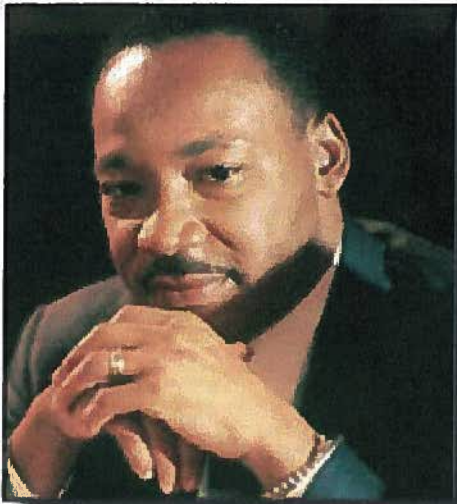
**We are pleased to introduce our new 2nd VP William Tegmier. Bill is a recent retiree with vast union experience as a chief steward and has agreed to step up and become a valuable member of our team. Carol, Bob, Phyllis and I look forward to serving with him.**

**The New Year is here and our annual \$20.00 membership dues are due. See our website, [www.cwalocal1103rnc.org](http://www.cwalocal1103rnc.org) for the PayPal option with credit/debit card payment or download an application form on the site and send your check made out to CWA Local 1103 RMC, to the Hall.**

**We thank all our members for their support.**

**In Solidarity,**

**Jeanette Spoor  
President, CWA Local 1103 RMC**



*"The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy."*

*Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.*

*January 15, 1929 – April 4, 1968*

Martin Luther King Day was celebrated on Monday, January 17, 2011. It is a day that celebrates the life of a great civil rights leader and advocate on behalf of workers. He supported workers everywhere whenever he spoke-up for dignity and respect in the workplace. Martin Luther King Jr. achieved many accomplishments in his life before it was tragically cut short on the evening of April 4, 1968.

CWA Local 1103 honors this great man who proudly stood up for the collective rights of organized labor while standing up for the rights of all individuals. Perhaps it is wiser to use Coretta Scott King's own eloquence as she painted a portrait of her husband when defining the holiday and its importance. "The Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday celebrates the life and legacy of a man who brought hope and healing to America. We commemorate as well the timeless values he taught us through his example -- the values of courage, truth, justice, compassion, dignity, humility and service that so radiantly defined Dr. King's character and empowered his leadership. On this holiday, we commemorate the universal, unconditional love, forgiveness and nonviolence that empowered his revolutionary spirit."

There are of course many reasons for honoring him on Martin Luther King Day, but a very important reason for all Union men and women, one that's often



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## PERIODICAL

overlooked, is King's championing of the cause for organized labor and in particular, the striking Memphis sanitation workers. In fact, King declared "Our needs are identical with labor's needs: Decent wages, fair working conditions, livable housing, old-age security, health and welfare measures, conditions in which families can grow, have education for their children, and respect in the community." Martin Luther King Jr. knew and spoke often about the importance of the bond between workers rights and civil rights. African-Americans and workers were groups that endured oppression because they lacked power. The civil rights movement to successfully overthrow Jim Crow laws, segregationist attitude, inferior treatment, and hostility were due to many reasons, but important, was its strategy to include a mass movement of disruption and risk. Today, individual workers have little or no power; workers only gain power through a collective voice, but as in the civil rights movement, workers rights will only really improve utilizing a similar, successful community campaign that incorporates disruption and risk as tactics. We have learned much from Martin Luther King Jr.

He also spoke out and lobbied hard against the so called 'right to work' laws enacted in many states. He believed those laws would undermine collective bargaining because he knew that justice for work-

ers, the working poor, would come about when they were given the opportunity to bargain for better wages and better working conditions. "In our glorious fight for civil rights, we must guard against being fooled by false slogans, such as 'right to work.' It is a law to rob us of our civil rights and job rights. It is supported by Southern segregationists who are trying to keep us from achieving our civil rights and our right of equal job opportunity. Its purpose is to destroy labor unions and the freedom of collective bargaining by which unions have improved wages and working conditions of everyone...Wherever these laws have been passed, wages are lower, job opportunities are fewer and there are no civil rights. We do not intend to let them do this to us. We demand this fraud be stopped. Our weapon is our vote," said King.

Men and women of all color, religion, race, sex, sexuality, and creed owe something for the freedom's they now enjoy to Martin Luther King Jr. King's life, work, and his philosophy and methods of nonviolence for social change, including his dedication to collective organization and empowerment of workers are reason why every Union Member should honor King's legacy. CWA Local 1103 is proud to pay tribute to Martin Luther King Jr.

**Kevin Sheil,  
Vice President**