Vital services on the line

Nassau County services face drastic cuts due to misguided layoffs, Pages 10-11.
Cuomo’s proposed budget: an assault on workers

ALBANY — CSEA has deep concerns about Gov. Andrew Cuomo’s 2012 budget proposal, which relies heavily on privatization of services and gambles with the security of future workers through yet another pension tier that would put workers’ retirement savings in the stock market.

“Gov. Cuomo seems out of touch with the day-to-day challenges that public workers in both state and local government face as a result of his budget priorities. Too many necessary services in every part of the state are deteriorating because people are working short-staffed and at risk without adequate equipment, training and backup,” said CSEA President Danny Donohue. (See president's column, Page 4.)

The total budget is $132.5 billion, a 1.9 percent increase over last year. The budget closes a remaining $2 billion budget gap with no new taxes or fees, leaving a $715 million deficit for the 2013-14 budget year.

Gambling with retirement savings

The creation of a proposed Tier VI is a direct attack on public employees. On the one hand, it assumes that workers’ retirement savings will not face the roller-coaster ride of Wall Street investing. For example, many private sector workers approaching retirement age who had their retirement savings in 401(k) savings in the past five years saw their savings erode or disappear altogether.

There are no provisions to help retirees when their savings evaporate, meaning that municipalities will have the burden of providing for needs that the current pension system covers.

The proposed Tier VI would also:

- Exclude all overtime from final average salary; and
- Prohibit the use of unused sick leave for additional service credit at retirement.

Privatization

Cuomo wants to close Kingsboro Psychiatric Center (See story, Page 9). No other facilities are yet named for closure, but Cuomo’s budget proposes a 324-bed reduction at the state Office of Children and Family Services and would allow New York City to take over administration of youth services programs.

This essentially equates to saying that the governor intends to close the upstate youth facilities, which will gut these communities of decent jobs with benefits, resulting in further economic erosion upstate and directly affecting CSEA members in those communities.

Cuomo also proposes giving agency commissioners in Office of Mental Health (OMH) and Office of Alcohol and Substance Abuse Services (OASAS) the ability to contract directly with managed behavioral health organizations, which essentially would allow the commissioners to privatize work now performed by state employees.

Further, it would allow the OMH commissioner to close, consolidate, reduce, transfer, or otherwise redesign services of hospitals and implement significant service reductions. This gives the commissioner remarkable power to directly privatize CSEA members’ jobs.

“Our members need to keep in mind, this notification procedure does not expire at the end of the fiscal year. If this budget passes, this measure is on the books for good, which gives the commissioner, in essence, the governor, an extraordinary amount of power in determining facility closures, consolidations and mergers,” Donohue said.

Get complete budget details at www.csealocal1000.org/pac_index.php

Correction

A photograph of Board of Directors candidate Susan Sheehan was mistakenly left out of the January Work Force. Sheehan, Town of Queensbury, is seeking the Warren County board seat in the Local Government Division in a contested race with David J. Duell, also Town of Queensbury.

Sheehan

Online option coming for leadership mailing!

Attention CSEA activists and leaders: You will soon be receiving information in the mail on how to access the CSEA leadership mailing online. No more paper, if you choose this option!

Update your information online

CSEA is improving its ability to send you critical information. Log in to www.csealocal1000.org, and select “APPS” and “My CSEA” from to make sure your contact information is up to date.
VALHALLA — Westchester Medical Center CEO Mike Israel took another step last month in his apparent plan to destroy the hospital’s public mission, abruptly laying off 155 CSEA members who care for some of the hospital’s most vulnerable patients and replacing them with lower-paid contractors.

Israel told local media he plans to “restructure” the hospital’s Behavioral Health Center, which provides a variety of inpatient and outpatient services for residents struggling with mental illness, by contracting with the Pennsylvania-based Liberty Healthcare Group. Israel’s latest attack on the hospital’s middle class work force comes on the heels of 105 CSEA layoffs in December.

‘Restructuring’ destructive

“Apparently, the word ‘restructuring’ is a corporate code word that really means you’re sticking it to dedicated union workers,” said Southern Region President Billy Riccaldo. “This isn’t about saving money. This is about lining the pockets of the bigwigs at Liberty Healthcare while offering insulting starting salaries for the workers actually caring for patients.”

This latest round of layoffs singles out the members of CSEA, who work in the center as psychiatric social workers, psychiatric aides, recreation therapists, and clerks.

“Mike Israel has made his intentions clear,” said Westchester County Local President John Staino. “He wants to get rid of every public employee in this hospital. He wants to run Westchester Medical Center like it’s a private corporation. He’s made that clear by rejecting transparency in the operation of this hospital, consistently ignoring civil service rules and regulations when dealing with our members, and busting the unions in this hospital every chance he gets.”

But the medical center is far from a private hospital. As a public benefit corporation tasked with taking on clients regardless of their financial means, the hospital has a unique mission unlike that of smaller neighboring facilities.

“Mike Israel isn’t just betraying the work force when he makes these cuts, he’s betraying the people who depend on this hospital most,” said Westchester Medical Center Unit President Peter Piazza. “The hospital exists to serve the public, not to fatten the coffers of his corporate cronies. When you take away good union jobs like we have at the Behavioral Health Center and replace them with underpaid contractors, it damages the quality care we workers have worked so hard to build up.”

— Jessica Ladlee

— See cartoon, Page 5

February 2012 — The Work Force 3
CSEA to Gov. Cuomo: No sale!

If you didn’t pay close attention to Gov. Andrew Cuomo’s state budget presentation, start doing so now. He’s not threatening layoffs; he’s not even talking about dramatic cutbacks but your future is at stake. The governor’s smooth words can’t mask the harsh reality that he’s ready to sell you out!

That’s right, the days of public services being delivered by capable and dedicated career public employees may be numbered in our state if the governor gets his way. The evidence in his budget is clear: the governor is moving forward with privatizing public services, starting with youth detention and developmental disabilities services. But it’s not just state agencies — a state takeover of Medicaid administration will take jobs out of local government and send them to private contractors, too. And, he’s just getting started.

The budget is full of schemes that will undermine public services and make it easier for the governor to close facilities, end services and shift responsibilities without anyone questioning it. These are not good changes for CSEA members or the public.

There’s more: the governor’s proposal for a new public employee pension tier is an assault on the middle class and a cheap shot at public employees. It will provide no short-term savings and will mean people will have to work longer, pay more and gain less benefit. Even if we are talking only about future employees, the governor’s proposal devalues workers and will mean less retirement security and a more difficult work life, which will further erode the middle class. The governor is quick to claim enormous potential savings but he fails to say that they will come at the expense of working people.

The governor’s proposal of a 401(k) style option as part of Tier VI is certainly in keeping with his drive to privatize public services as it also will simplify shifting public employees into private sector operations. A 401(k) option be attractive to highly paid political appointees who could max out their contribution, have it matched by the public employer and take it with them as they come and go. It’s a lot different for front-line career employees who have to worry about whether being at the mercy of Wall Street ups and downs will provide you with adequate retirement security 30 years from now.

Gov. Cuomo needs to know that your future is not for sale!
Income inequality, pension reform take their toll

Since the 1970s, the gap between rich and poor has been widening. Today, the squeeze on the middle class is at its worst.

It’s now common knowledge that the top 1 percent in this country holds more wealth than the bottom 95 percent combined, leaving the rest of us to make do with what is left. A steady decline in wages, loss of jobs, corporate loopholes and changes in our tax structure augment the disparity and continue to keep us down and struggling as we move into 2012.

Retirees under fire

In recent years, retirees have been under attack as politicians fuel misconceptions and mislead the public to believe that public work force pensions are “unsustainable” and to blame for economic ills.

Painting an image of retirees living like fat cats off the gifts of taxpayers and saying that we can achieve short term or even medium term savings needed to solve current economic woes by creating yet another pension tier is terribly mistaken, deceiving and unethical at best.

Retirees have sacrificed enough already.

Historically, the public sector makes less in wages than private sector peers doing the same kind of work and the great equalizer has always been good benefits and a stable pension system.

Eroding a system that was put in place to protect our nation’s elderly and equalizes public and private sector work has greater consequences than have yet been realized.

Cutting from retirement benefits doesn’t change the fact that costs of living and inflation will continue to rise as pensions are slashed. Calling on retirees to work longer only to pay more and receive less makes the income gap worse and it could very well drive our state’s middle class aging population below the poverty line.

— Jill Asencio
Youth aides take a beating in state facilities

ALBANY — Workers in state juvenile detention facilities are literally taking a beating at the hands of youths assigned to their care.

Increasingly dangerous conditions in the facilities, including one where 19 staff, including the facility director, have recently been victims of violent attacks by youths in their care. Workers are also victims of a complete lack of support or concern for their safety from officials at the state Office of Children and Family Services, which runs the facilities.

“For years, CSEA has consistently and loudly warned about the danger in which front line workers at OCFS are being placed and it’s time someone listens before anyone else gets hurt,” CSEA President Danny Donohue said.

Blaming the victim

OCFS officials have responded to CSEA’s criticisms by blaming the workers, saying that CSEA members are using improper techniques when restraining youths.

“It’s sad that they choose to blame the victim. Besides, if a youth is being restrained, it’s not because the worker did anything wrong. The OCFS response is an insult to employees who put themselves on the line every day,” Donohue said.

At present, 18 out of 33 youth division aides (YDAs) employed at the Taberg Residential Center in Oneida County are out of work due to severe injuries suffered in attacks by residents. Their injuries include two broken collarbones, a concussion, a broken ankle and a dislocated shoulder.

To cover for their fallen co-workers and provide the round-the-clock supervision residents require, the remaining aides must work double shifts, making their physically and emotionally draining jobs even more stressful and more dangerous.

Taberg is symptomatic of a larger problem. According to a report issued by the state Department of Civil Service on state employee Workers’ Compensation claims, YDAs have the second highest on-the-job injury rate of all state job titles. CSEA blames the injuries at Taberg on insufficient staffing and training needed to deal with the influx of residents from the Tryon Girls Residential Center in Fulton County, which shut down last year.

The union said the arrival of female residents with no procedural changes has changed the make-up of the previously all male facility, increasing the risk for violence against staff there.

Violent attacks on staff by youths in their care have increased at an alarming rate in recent years since OCFS began shifting from a correctional model to a so-called “sanctuary model” which centers on reducing or eliminating restraints.

OCFS officials have repeatedly ignored the union’s concerns that front line workers aren’t being given the resources and support, including adequate staffing levels and proper training, necessary to make the sanctuary model work. There is no evidence that OCFS has any plan to ensure that the appropriate resources will ever be provided and CSEA is concerned that continued cutbacks in state operations will make conditions even more dangerous.

“For too long, OCFS has shown a complete disregard for the safety of its staff,” Donohue said. “We cannot afford to continue policies that compromise public safety and put youth and staff at risk. We need a commitment to provide the leadership and resources necessary to ensure the safety and well being of youths, staff and the community.”

— Ed Molitor, Mark Kotzin

‘I was punched in the face and ...’

These quotes are from an unidentified Youth Developmental Aide at the Taberg Residential Center in Oneida County. The worker asked to remain anonymous due to fear of retribution from OCFS.

“I was punched in the face and a girl spit in my mouth when I had an open cut in my mouth. I was out for three or four weeks with that, but I’ve had numerous injuries due to restraints.

Today we had an incident where a guy had a chair thrown at his head and he had to go out and get stitches.

It’s very chaotic here. The girls won’t be held accountable, no matter what happens, and when push comes to shove, it usually comes to a restraint, because the girls don’t want to hear it. Sometimes when you go to put one in a restraint, two others jump on top of you, kicking and biting.

It’s a systemic problem. Columbia had a riot the other day from the girls we sent them. It’s not just here, it’s everywhere. It’s systemic from the top down.

With people being out with the assaults, it’s not easy. People think that the girls will be held accountable and it will go away, but it’s not going away. There needs to be some further action we can take.”

— Mark Kotzin
CSEA activist Benson elected to Sullivan County Legislature

FALLSBURG — Forget about Wisconsin Gov. Scott Walker’s attacks on public workers. Tune out the anti-union rhetoric on Fox News. According to Town of Fallsburg Unit President Gene Benson, the time is right for labor activists to run for office.

Benson speaks from experience. In November, he defeated an entrenched Republican incumbent in the race to represent Fallsburg and a portion of Neversink in the Sullivan County Legislature. The catalyst for his bid for office, Benson said, was a round of layoffs in the county work force in 2010.

“It was when I went to a rally to support the county workers who were losing their jobs that I just said, ‘I’m done,’” said Benson, a wastewater treatment plant operator who has served as CSEA unit president in Fallsburg on-and-off for 25 years. “I felt that you couldn’t just keep laying off $25,000-a-year employees to balance your budget.”

Jobs are top concern

While the current high unemployment rate is an issue across the state, Sullivan County has struggled for decades with attracting and retaining jobs since the once-bustling Catskills tourism trade declined. Long active in the town Democratic Party, Benson toyed with running for office in prior years, but the need to protect decent local jobs helped solidify his decision to run in 2011.

“State and local government jobs are major sources of stable employment in Sullivan County,” said Benson, who was elected vice-chairman of the legislature at its first meeting. “We can’t afford to lose these jobs. The new Democratic majority on the legislature has pledged to adopt a budget with no job cuts.”

The right time to run

Benson is one of the countless thousands of union activists who descended on Madison, Wis., during the height of Walker’s attacks on public employees. He called the atmosphere simultaneously exciting and upsetting.

“The response from labor was incredible, but it’s hard to believe this happened in one of the most progressive states in the union,” said Benson.

After witnessing the pushback from workers in Wisconsin and seeing Sullivan voters overwhelmingly support his pledge to be a voice for the middle class, Benson said there is no better time for CSEA members to consider a run for office.

“As a union rep, I know what the issues are for working people,” said Benson. “We’ve seen a war on working people, but people have had enough of it.”

— Jessica Ladlee

Using prisoners at Department of Motor Vehicles call center hurts workers

ALBANY — At a time when thousands of New York families are struggling to find jobs and pay their bills, New York state has decided to help prisoners develop “marketable skills” rather than make appropriate and necessary jobs available to law abiding citizens who would then pay their taxes, spend their paychecks and contribute in the local community.

“While not a new program, using prisoners to do the work of Department of Motor Vehicle employees is a bad idea generally and even worse considering the current economy,” said CSEA President Danny Donohue.

CSEA can only remain skeptical about claims of taxpayer savings from this scheme when security and close supervision costs are considered.

“It’s another swipe at public employees by equating the work of hard working, responsible and dedicated employees with incarcerated criminals in the public’s mind,” Donohue said.
Workers fight sale of nursing home

MAYVILLE – Chautauqua County officials are threatening to sell the county nursing home, and union members are doing everything possible to make sure that does not happen.

Union members, led by the CSEA Chautauqua County Unit, have been rallying, speaking out at county legislature meetings and speaking with the public about the value of the public county facility. More than 200 people live at the home, receiving essential, quality, safety net services from dedicated unionized staff.

“This nursing home is an important part of the community,” said CSEA Western Region President Flo Tripi. “It is critical that residents of Chautauqua County have a place to call home, regardless of ability to pay or the severity of their illness. Selling the nursing home would be detrimental to the community.”

Signs stating “Save Our County Home” can be seen in front of homes and businesses throughout the county and bright green T-shirts light the night monthly outside the county office building.

“We will not allow county officials to take this home away from residents who need it,” said CSEA Chautauqua County Unit President Rose Conti. “We will be there, constantly reminding legislators they have a responsibility to the residents. These are men and women who have lived their lives in Chautauqua County, worked here and paid taxes here, and now their public nursing home may be in jeopardy. It’s just not right.”

Union members held a rally in November, before a meeting in which lawmakers were expected to begin the marketing process of the county home. Chants and cheers could be heard for an hour outside, before CSEA members took to the microphone inside the meeting.

Lawmakers decided that night to table the resolution until the new legislature took office in January. However they later reneged and at their next meeting narrowly voted to sign with the marketing firm.

“I went to that next meeting to thank them for tabling it so the issue could be properly reviewed and studied,” Conti said. “I still thanked them, but then I told them how they have disappointed me.”

Conti said the county began considering selling the home as far back as 1986. Legislators then decided the home should remain public, providing essential services to all county residents. She questions what has changed since then and asked legislators why they seem to be rushing.

The Chautauqua County Nursing Home is a 216-bed skilled nursing facility on 30 acres. The fight to save the home will continue.

Bonnie Peters, front, leads a rally outside the Chautauqua County office building. CSEA members, labor brothers and sisters, and supporters from the community gathered to demonstrate against the possible sale of the county’s public nursing home.

— Lynn Miller

Volunteers sought to take part in long-term cancer study

Here’s how you can help find a cure for cancer.

The American Cancer Society’s Cancer Prevention Study, or CPS-3, will attempt to better understand the factors that cause or prevent cancer. The study’s ultimate goal is to eliminate cancer as a major health concern for future generations.

The study is currently focusing on enrollment with a goal to enroll 300,000 adults from various racial/ethnic backgrounds from across the U.S. Participants will be followed for 20 to 30 years. The American Cancer Society will be conducting a two-day enrollment event in the Capital Region at the Empire State Convention Center May 2 and 3.

You can become a CPS-3 study participant if you:

• are between the ages of 30 and 65;
• have never been diagnosed with cancer; and,

For the Albany event, interested participants will be able to schedule an appointment online. They will then be sent a link to complete an online survey. On the day of the intake, participants will meet with medical staff who will take a blood sample (no testing occurs, the samples are stored) and measure waist circumference. Participants will be required to complete periodic surveys every two to three years.

More details about how to participate will be provided in upcoming issues of The Work Force.

— Therese Assalian

For more information about CPS-3, visit www.cancer.org/cps3
BROOKLYN — Dozens of CSEA, PEF and UUP-represented workers at Kingsboro Psychiatric Center and SUNY Downstate recently demonstrated outside the New York Marriott at the Brooklyn Bridge to protest investment banker Stephen Berger’s recommendations for restructuring health care in the central part of the borough.

Berger, the architect of the 2006 closure of several hospitals around the state, including Victory Memorial in Brooklyn, was in the hotel presenting his recommendations at the time of the demonstration.

“Brooklyn is being unfairly targeted by these cuts,” said CSEA Metropolitan Region President Lester Crockett. “This borough has one of the most diverse populations in the state and these facilities are staffed with professionals who live in these communities.”

Berger’s latest recommendations include closing Kingsboro Psychiatric Center and closing beds at SUNY Downstate and shifting inpatient operations to the Long Island College Hospital campus. The 88-page report, “The Health Systems Redesign: Brooklyn Workgroup,” cites the loss of Medicare/Medicaid certification at Kingsboro, which now costs the state Office of Mental Health $3 million per month. CSEA blames bad management on the part of Kingsboro administrators for the loss of that certification and funding.

Management has failed the CMS (Certified Medical Service) survey three consecutive times because they have been unable or unwilling to create the kind of programs necessary to meet individual patient needs, CSEA officials said.

Members at both institutions also say closing these facilities would create an unfair burden for many families who may be unable to visit loved ones at facilities located hours away from their homes.

“Bankers created this financial crisis. How can they be entrusted with our hospitals and health care?” asked Kingsboro Psychiatric Center Local president Fitzroy Wilson.

Members at both facilities say they will continue to organize with their respective communities and also meet with local legislators.

—from the CSEA website

Above and below left, CSEA Metropolitan Region members and activists demonstrate in front of the New York Marriott at the Brooklyn Bridge to fight a recommendation to close Kingsboro Psychiatric Center and SUNY Downstate.

Bankers created this financial crisis. How can they be entrusted with our hospitals and health care?”

AFSCME is accepting applications for the 2012 Jerry Clark Memorial Award.

Scholarships will be awarded to two children of AFSCME members who are currently college sophomores majoring in the social sciences. Each recipient will receive $5,000 per year for their junior and senior years of study and an opportunity to intern in AFSCME’s Political Action Department.

Applications are due NO LATER than April 30, 2012.

To learn more or to download an application, visit AFSCME’s website at http://www.afscme.org.
Politically inspired layoffs restrict vital public services in Nassau County

The situation in the Department of Social Services (DSS) has been especially dire. Nassau County recently issued layoff notices to 243 Nassau Local members and nearly 200 more county workers were demoted several pay grades. Another 114 CSEA members from 16 different departments accepted voluntary retirement packages that paid them $1,000 for every year of service and preserved roughly 150 jobs that otherwise would have been lost to a second round of layoffs in February.

Social Services hits hardest

The Department of Social Services (DSS) lost 106 employees to the year-end cuts, more than any other department. The county directed CSEA to deliver $54 million in savings by the end of 2011 and another $7 million by Feb. 1.

Laricchiuta said the total union membership has been lost to a second round of layoffs in Nassau County.

“People are waiting all day without getting any service,” said Nassau Local President Jerry Laricchiuta. “The crowds gather outside before the building opens, the lobby is packed to capacity all day long and there are sometimes even lines out the door.” The county directed CSEA to deliver $54 million in savings by the end of 2011 and another $7 million by Feb. 1. Laricchiuta said the total union

A quarter of the people currently on probation are not being visited by their probation officers. Instead, the county instructed we send letters to ascertain their status. The warrant unit is also making very few arrests and sending letters asking drug and sex offenders to turn themselves in.

Nassau County Probation Officer Randy Knight holds a stack of paper work previously done by clerical staff that have been laid off. Probation workers are concerned that public safety will be compromised by the layoffs.

Department of Public Works (DPW) also lost their jobs, which will severely restrict the county’s ability to keep its infrastructure intact. “Routine jobs like repairing potholes, resurfacing roads, restoring street lights, fixing fleet vehicles and installing stop signs will all take longer and negatively affect quality of life,” said DPW Unit President Bob Campo.

But Nassau Local officers remain focused on getting as many of their members back to work as possible, and that includes the 128 who lost their jobs last June. “We will make every effort to demonstrate that services have been compromised by these layoffs and that it is imperative our members go back to work,” Laricchiuta said.

— Richard Impagliazzo

Nassau County Probation Officer Randy Knight holds a stack of paper work previously done by clerical staff that have been laid off. Probation workers are concerned that public safety will be compromised by the layoffs.

Laricchiuta said, “The number is so insignificant that it is usually not believed. I think 90 percent of our residents would have passed such a minor increase, but this administration has been using the nontax increase mantra since they got into office.”

According to Newsday, departing workers predicted Nassau will save nothing because it will have to subsidize an increase in unemployment and other forms of public assistance for laid-off workers. “It’s just unfair to everybody and it doesn’t make any sense,” said Laura Demody. Dermody worked for the county for 10 years and at DSS for the past five as an alcohol-rehab counselor. A single mother with two children, Dermody told Newsday she expects to file for unemployment, food stamps and Medicaid.

“This process has been torturous. It’s been very degrading,” she told the newspaper.

“It’s just horrible,” said Lauren Quigley, who was let go from her job as a county assistant for DSS. “I am very upset,” she told Newsday.

The situation in the Department of Probation is not much better. The entire support staff consisting of 14 clerks was eliminated along with 24 probation officer assistants, seven of which retired voluntarily. Probation officers are now performing clerical duties as a result, which is affecting their ability to do their own jobs and creating the possibility that public safety could be put at risk.

Probation risks

“A quarter of the people currently on probation are not being visited by their probation officers,” said Nassau Local Probation Unit President Marla Rowe. “Instead, the county instructed we send letters to ascertain their status. The warrant unit is also making very few arrests and sending letters asking drug and sex offenders to turn themselves in.”

Dowzens of general laborers in the Nassau County Work Force

Nassau County Executive Ed Mangano has struck again, except this time the blow leveled against working families is going to have a direct impact on county residents and the services they receive.

Nassau County recently issued layoff notices to 243 Nassau Local members and nearly 200 more county workers were demoted several pay grades. Another 114 CSEA members from 16 different departments accepted voluntary retirement packages that paid them $1,000 for every year of service and preserved roughly 150 jobs that otherwise would have been lost to a second round of layoffs in February.

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— Richard Impagliazzo

Nassau County Probation Officer Randy Knight holds a stack of paper work previously done by clerical staff that have been laid off. Probation workers are concerned that public safety will be compromised by the layoffs.
‘Move over’ law expanded, in part through CSEA efforts

For a year now, New York’s “move over” law has been in effect, requiring motorists on multi-lane highways to change lanes and slow down for police and emergency vehicles stopped along the side of the road.

As part of CSEA’s Don’t Zone Out safety campaign, CSEA successfully lobbied in support of a recent amendment to the state law to include road workers.

Motorists are now required, when possible, to change lanes for amber lights (road workers) as well as for emergency vehicles. When it is not possible to move over, or there is only one lane, drivers must slow down. The penalty is a moving violation carrying three points on your license and up to a $150 fine.

“The men and women working on our roads, highways and bridges perform essential services often under dangerous conditions. It is common sense to expand this law to include them and offer the same respect we now give to police and first responders,” said CSEA President Danny Donohue.

Laws such as this and programs such as the Don’t Zone Out campaign that highlight distracted driving are making a difference, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration and the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT). Data for 2010 show the lowest highway fatality rate since 1949.

“While we have more work to do to continue to protect American motorists, these numbers show we’re making historic progress when it comes to improving safety on our nation’s roadways. Thanks to the
tireless work of our safety agencies and partner organizations over the past few decades, to save lives and reduce injuries, we’re saving lives, reducing injuries, and building the foundation for what we hope will be even greater success in the future,” said U.S. Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood.

A nationwide effort to make roads safer

A nationwide distracted driving ban is being considered.

Led by U.S. Rep. Carolyn McCarthy of New York, the “Safe Drivers Act” would direct the secretary of transportation to establish minimum regulations banning the use of hand-held mobile devices on a public road while operating a moving or idling motor vehicle, except in the case of an emergency.

It would also require the U.S. Department of Transportation to conduct a detailed study on distracted driving with the results sent back to Congress along with proposals for amendments and penalties. If a state did not comply with the federal DOT’s minimum standards within two years, it would risk losing 25 percent of its federal highway transportation funding.

As it stands, 13 states have no laws addressing handheld cell phone use. Ten states have no laws addressing texting while driving and eight states have no laws whatsoever limiting the use of cell phones while driving, whether for voice calls or texting.

Only eight states, including New York, prohibit all drivers – including novice drivers, bus drivers and adults – from using handheld cell phones while driving for any purpose.

— Jill Asencio

Donohue
Considering retirement?

Enjoy the benefits of CSEA retiree membership

Almost time to retire? Your current local may pay the first year of CSEA retiree dues, which is only $24! Contact your local president for more details.

Make sure you also contact the CSEA retiree local in your region. Information is listed on this page. Visit www.csealocal1000.org and select “CSEA Retiree Members” from the “For CSEA Members” menu.

Benefits of Membership

CSEA retiree members enjoy many of the benefits and discounts of belonging to a union. In return, you get access to a wide variety of money-saving benefits such as:

- Access to insurance plans at CSEA’s low group rates.
- Travel discounts.
- A discounted consumer items buying service.
- Discounted dental and vision care programs.
- A personal legal services referral network.
- The Retiree News quarterly

Being a CSEA retiree member also makes you part of a growing statewide body that can effectively advocate on your behalf:

- Legislative and political action programs designed to enhance and protect retiree pension and health benefits.
- Participation in a CSEA Retiree Local.
- Effective lobbying against Social Security reform.

Information:
Diane Sheldon
Retiree Program Specialist
143 Washington Avenue
Albany, NY 12210
(518) 257-1220
(800) 342-4146 (Toll Free)
(518) 436-0398 (Fax)
diane.sheldon@cseainc.org
ALBANY — When Nancy Hoffman was hired as CSEA’s general counsel in 1988, the union’s fledgling Legal Department had just a handful of lawyers, limited resources and no history of accomplishment.

Twenty-three years later, CSEA’s legal operation is one of the most respected and effective in organized labor.

Hoffman, who retired from CSEA at the end of December, can claim much of the credit for building and leading the department into excellence. It was no small feat and reflects Hoffman’s intense focus and drive.

Today, CSEA’s Legal Department activities include advocacy and member representation in contract disputes, disciplinary proceedings and public policy lawsuits, overseeing a network of legal member benefits programs and advising and assisting with CSEA’s internal operations.

Staff attorneys and other legal staff work with other CSEA departments and many outside regional attorneys to protect the interests of CSEA members.

Early days at CSEA

It wasn’t always like that. Between the early days of CSEA and 1987, the union relied on outside legal counsel for many representation activities. In the mid-1980s, CSEA began exploring its options and decided to bring its legal representation in-house. Hoffman would become the driving force in the department’s development and impact.

“We are not just lawyers,” Hoffman said. “We handle cases very well, but we have a lot of talent in the Legal Department and over the years we have demonstrated an ability to contribute to the success of CSEA in so many different ways.”

“In the union, you have to fundamentally understand the business because your job is not to have the answers. Your job is to have questions,” Hoffman said. “Where do you want to get to, Mr. President? Where do you want to get to, labor relations specialist?”

Personal legal services

Hoffman said the development of a wide range of personal legal service benefit programs that can help individuals in areas such as workers’ compensation, dealing with personal legal matters and helping with planning for the well being of aging loved ones provide an outstanding complement to the union members’ representation. It has also strengthened the union’s focus on the well being of the individual member.

(Information about the union’s personal legal services is available in the members only section of the CSEA website: www.csealocal1000.org).

“I think the thing for the member to understand is that on or off the job, if you have a legal problem, you can come to your union and your union has quality lawyers who will take care of you, who are accountable to the union for their action or inaction,” she said.

A native of Long Island, Hoffman graduated from the Cornell University School of Industrial and Labor Relations and earned a master’s degree in American History from New York University and her law degree from St. John’s University.

She serves on many community and public service boards and advisory councils, including the Cornell Council, Government Law Center at Albany Law School, the Community Foundation of the Capital Region and the Albany Institute of History and Art. Hoffman has especially been a passionate advocate, board member and volunteer with Girls Inc., where she has worked tirelessly to help inspire and empower young women.

CSEA staff attorneys Steven Crain and Daren Rylewicz have been appointed by CSEA President Danny Donohue as co-counsels to succeed Hoffman.

“It’s time for me to move on and I can do so knowing that CSEA’s Legal Department is on a solid foundation with very strong leadership and an enormously talented and capable staff,” Hoffman said. “CSEA members will continue to be well served.”

“I think CSEA’s complexity is the biggest challenge the Legal Department faces. What sets us apart from anywhere else is when all is said and done, our activists and our staff, they have the biggest hearts in the world and we always manage to do the right thing for the members because that’s the ultimate thing that we’re all looking at.”

Nancy Hoffman, in a 2006 interview for the CSEA 100 History Project

Former CSEA General Counsel Nancy Hoffman at her desk in CSEA Headquarters.
The NYS and CSEA Partnership for Education and Training is on Facebook!

Log on today to get the latest news from the Partnership at www.facebook.com/pages/NYS-CSEA-Partnership-for-Education-and-Training

The NYS & CSEA Partnership for Education and Training provides programs and services that improve organizational effectiveness and advance the quality of worklife of CSEA-represented state employees.

This members only benefit program provides attorney representation for Workers’ Compensation, Social Security Disability, Personal Injury 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.

Finding a CSEA Legal Services Program attorney is as simple as calling the CSEA toll-free number: 1-800-342-4146 and following the prompts for the Legal Services Program. Listen to the directions for accessing the Injury-Related Plans, or the Non-Injury Related Plans, which includes the Taking Care of Business Plan. Information is also available on the CSEA website at www.csealocal1000.org.

1-800-342-4146
What’s new in 2012
For New York state active state enrollees covered under NYSHIP

The Empire Plan

- Licensed Nurse Practitioners and Convenience Care Clinics are eligible participating providers.
- The Empire Plan began a new program that guarantees access to primary care physicians and certain specialists. Please look for an Empire Plan report that will contain additional information about this new program.
- There is a combined non-participating basic medical annual deductible amount for medical/surgical and mental health and substance abuse services and a combined basic medical coinsurance maximum for hospital, medical/surgical and mental health and substance abuse services. Additional information follows.

Empire Plan Basic Medical Annual Deductible: $1,000

When a CSEA active State Empire Plan enrollee uses a non-participating Empire Plan provider, claims are paid under the Basic Medical Program. When claims are paid under the Basic Medical Program, enrollees are responsible to pay a “deductible” before the health plan begins to reimburse for services. The Jan. 1, 2012 basic medical annual deductible (combined for medical/surgical and mental health and substance abuse services) is $1,000* for the enrollee, $1,000* for the enrolled spouse/domestic partner and $1,000* for all dependent children.

*The $1,000 annual deductible is reduced to $500 for calendar year 2012 for employees in (or equated to) salary grade 6 or below.

Empire Plan Basic Medical Annual Coinsurance Maximum: $3,000

When a CSEA active State Empire Plan enrollee uses a non-participating Empire Plan provider and meets the basic medical annual deductible, the Empire Plan pays 80 percent medical (90 percent of non-participating hospital) of reasonable and customary charges for covered services. The remaining 20 percent medical (10 percent hospital) that the individual is responsible for is considered “coinsurance.” The annual coinsurance maximum (combined medical/surgical, mental health, substance abuse and hospital services) effective Jan. 1, 2012 is $3,000* for the enrollee, $3,000* for the enrolled spouse/domestic partner and $3,000* for all dependent children. Once the annual coinsurance maximum is met, the Empire Plan pays 100 percent of reasonable and customary charges for covered services.

*The $3,000 coinsurance maximum expense is reduced to $1,500 for calendar year 2012 for employees in (or equated to) salary grade 6 or below.

All NYSHIP Plans

The annual opt out period ended Dec. 30, 2011. However, any new hire or new benefits-eligible employee who has other employer-sponsored group health insurance and wishes to participate in the opt-out program, must make the election no later than the first date of your eligibility for NYSHIP. Enrollees should see your agency health benefits administrator and complete the NYS Health Insurance Transaction Form (PS-404) and the 2012 Opt-out Attestation Form (PS-409).

Empire Plan claim deadlines for calendar year 2011

Empire Plan enrollees have until April 30, 2012 (120 days after the end of the calendar year) in which to submit medical expenses which were incurred during the 2011 plan year 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, NY 10008-1407

For Empire Plan and non-network Inpatient or 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, KY 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/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.
In 2010, the CSEA Employee Benefit Fund (EBF) issued benefit identification cards to all primary policyholders in the EBF dental and/or vision plan. The cards were issued to phase out use of Social Security numbers to access benefits and process claims.

The EBF card uses a randomly generated nine-digit number that members can use instead of their Social Security number when they visit a dentist or call with a question on a claim. The card is red and white with the image of the U.S. flag along the top.

Since the cards were issued, some questions have arisen as well as some misunderstandings regarding the use of the card. Some things you should know about the benefit ID card are:

• The EBF ID number is listed directly below the primary policyholder’s name. It is a nine-digit number in bold print. Please use this number for dental and/or vision services, to check on the status of claims, and to verify personal information in our enrollment system.

• Each primary policyholder has been issued two benefit cards in the policyholder’s name. The same number will be used for all dependents.

Since the card contains the Member ID number, it is not necessary for all covered dependents to produce a card at the dental or vision provider’s office.

• If you did not receive a benefit identification card or if you lose a card you can simply log on to the EBF’s website at www.cseaebf.com and print out a card from your computer screen. If you do not have access to a computer you can still contact the Member Services Department at 1-800-323-2732 but the processing time for replacement cards averages four to six weeks.

• Please remember that receipt of the EBF benefit card is not an automatic guarantee of enrollment in dental and vision plans. All EBF plans are negotiated benefits. To verify which plans have been negotiated for you, please refer to your collective bargaining agreement or contact the CSEA EBF Marketing Department at 1-800-323-2732. You can also log on to the EBF’s website and click the “Benefit Search” box on the left side of the screen. An interactive map will help you to easily determine all of the benefits that have been negotiated for your unit.

February is National Heart Health Month

Love your heart, quit smoking.

Quitting smoking decreases your risk of a heart attack and stroke.

For free help call the NYS Smokers’ Quitline at 1-866-NY-Quits

February 2012
Ruby Mims and Millie Lucas come from opposite corners of New York state, but they have one passion in common: they love PEOPLE and they excel in recruiting.

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.

Mims, a Western Region activist who was named the top annual PEOPLE recruiter in 2009, again took the title in 2011 for active members. Lucas, a Long Island Region retiree activist, earned the title of top retiree PEOPLE recruiter for 2011.

A “wake-up call”
A longtime CSEA activist who has worked at the Erie County Department of Social Services for over 40 years, Mims travels throughout her region speaking to members and encouraging them to sign up to PEOPLE.

Mims insists that her approach to recruitment remains the same, but she cautioned that her message these days has taken a graver tone. “Workers are losing their rights and many are losing basic job protections,” she said. “When you speak to members about what’s happening in Wisconsin and other places, it’s a wake-up call.”

Mims highlighted some of the victories PEOPLE has played a key role in, including the permanent cost of living adjustment (COLA) for CSEA retirees, improved health care, and the fight to prevent the privatization of Medicare and Social Security.

“If more members sign up, we can have even more clout among legislators and do more for our community,” said Mims.

Proud of her accomplishments last year, Mims isn’t ready to take a break “There’s nothing different,” she said. “It’s about doing the right thing.”

PEOPLE a “lifeline”
Lucas, a Suffolk Area Retiree Local activist since retiring from Pilgrim Psychiatric Center, travels throughout Long Island participating in every meeting and discussion she can find time for.

“Being a PEOPLE member is your future and also being a union member is your future,” said Lucas. “I strongly urge them to belong to PEOPLE because it is the lifeline to our jobs.

“It’s definitely a way to empower people and empower our union,” said Lucas. “The more people that we have involved in PEOPLE the stronger we are as a union.”

Lucas often tells workers that the financial sacrifice is minimal. “Give up one cup of coffee twice a month and you can contribute to PEOPLE,” said Lucas, who also adds that the payoff occurs when “our money is used to help us with local, state and federal issues.”

Lucas is not planning to sit back. “I would like to continue to recruit people, get to other sites and get more members involved.”

— David Galarza

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 2012 Annual Delegates Meeting must be submitted by May 15, 2012.

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 2012 CSEA Annual Delegates Meeting will be held Oct. 15-19 in Washington, D.C.
2012 CSEA Election

2012 Special Board of Directors Election Schedule
Statewide Board of Directors Unfilled Seats:

- Economic Development, Health Department, Insurance Department, Mental Hygiene Southern Region 3, Mental Hygiene Capital Region 4, Office of Children and Family Services, Local Government Educational Capital Region 4, Local Government Educational Central Region 5.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>EVENT</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thursday, Jan. 12</td>
<td>Election Schedule approved by Board of Directors</td>
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<tr>
<td>Friday, Jan. 13</td>
<td>Notices of Nomination &amp; Election mailed to affected Locals</td>
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<tr>
<td>Friday, Jan. 20</td>
<td>Print Schedule &amp; Notice of Election in The Work Force</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wednesday, Feb. 1</td>
<td>Voter Eligibility Date</td>
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<td>Tuesday, Feb. 21</td>
<td>Start of Petitioning</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thursday, March 1</td>
<td>Inspection of Voter List</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tuesday, March 6</td>
<td>Deadline for Receipt of Nominating Petitions and candidate photos/5:00 p.m. at CSEA Headquarters</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tuesday, March 13</td>
<td>Deadline for Review of Invalid Signatures</td>
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<td>Tuesday, March 13</td>
<td>Deadline/Declinations &amp; Name Confirmation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tuesday, March 13</td>
<td>Deadline for campaign materials</td>
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<tr>
<td>Monday, March 19</td>
<td>Drawing for Ballot Position</td>
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<tr>
<td>Friday, March 23</td>
<td>Schedule Printed in The Work Force w/candidate photos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday, April 4</td>
<td>Ballots Mailed</td>
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<td>Wednesday, April 11</td>
<td>Replacement Ballots Available</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wednesday, April 25</td>
<td>Ballots Due/9:00 a.m./Tally commences/9:30 a.m.</td>
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<td>Ten (10) days after SEC</td>
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<tr>
<td>Certification of Results</td>
<td>Close of Protest Period</td>
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<tr>
<td>May 2012</td>
<td>Results Printed in The Work Force</td>
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**AFSCME DELEGATES ELECTION YEAR 2012**

- **Feb. 14, 2012:** Ballots due 8 a.m.; Tally commences 9 a.m.
- **Ten (10) days following Statewide Election Committee Certification of Results:** End of protest period
- **March 2012:** Results published in The Work Force

Balloting for the AFSCME Delegates election will take place at the same time and as part of the CSEA elections for Statewide officers, Region officers and Board of Directors. Members are urged to carefully read the election information contained in The Work Force throughout the Year 2012 election cycle as well as the instructions, which will accompany each mail ballot.

**CSEA Election Schedule for Statewide Officers, Region Officers, Statewide Board of Directors**

- **Feb. 14, 2012:** Deadline for receipt of ballots (8:00 a.m.). Ballot count commences (9:00 a.m.)

**Election Oversight**

The union’s Statewide Election Committee will oversee the election process. The American Arbitration Association, an independent election agency approved by the union’s Statewide Board of Directors, will conduct the balloting.

**Voting Eligibility Date**

Only CSEA members in good standing as of Dec. 1, 2011 will be eligible to vote in the election.

**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 military duty, upon return, are considered to have had continuous membership status for all CSEA election purposes.

Please notify the CSEA Membership Records 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.
I love to care for people!

“Caring about people is what I do. It’s in my blood. For several of our clients family is rare, and if they need a little extra care, someone with compassion has to do it. Why not me?

“I treat them as if they’re one of my family members. At the end of the day, we all know that we’re trying to reach one goal – and that’s if we can get someone functioning more independently, outside in the community. Then we did our job!”

Meet Maria Johnson

On the line every day.
People working together to make a better New York for all.
SMART | DYNAMIC | CARING | DEDICATED