



# Labor Fax

August 5, 2005

Volume 9, Issue 6

## OUR SECRET FOR SUCCESS

By Charles Wowkanech & Laurel Brennan

It is hard to believe that we are already midway through summer. 2005 has already proven to be a successful year for the labor movement here in New Jersey, and we have all of you to thank for that! The commitment and dedication our members and affiliated unions have for our State's working families certainly cannot be matched by any other interest group, trade organization or business association.

Our lobbying efforts have paid off and led to the signing of laws raising the State's minimum wage \$2 an hour by 2006, preventing the outsourcing of taxpayer funded service contracts, granting locked out workers unemployment benefits, requiring hospitals and nursing homes to provide staffing information to the public, and allowing workers to form a union through the card check method of organizing. Few organizations can claim similar success at moving a legislative agenda forward.

The early part of 2005 also saw the election of 17 rank-and-file union members running in non-partisan, school board and special elections. With an unprecedented number of union members seeking election in November's General Election, working families will continue to have their voices heard on important public policies in a very significant way throughout the State.

Finally, the New Jersey State AFL-CIO continues to be committed to growing the labor movement. We were honored to host the first Congressional Forum on the Employee Free Choice Act, a bill which will allow workers to join unions by signing authorization cards, and proud that this special event took place the same day the New Jersey Senate passed a state-wide version of this legislation. We also encourage affiliates to become active in our newly created Organizing Roundtable.

Indeed the first half of 2005 has been very fruitful for New Jersey's working families. Through continued solidarity, and by speaking in a united voice, we look forward to achieving much more in the remaining months of this year.



1998  
Labor Fax  
APEX Award

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## NJ STATE AFL-CIO ENDORSES CORZINE

More than 600 delegates at the New Jersey State AFL-CIO Legislative/COPE Endorsement Conference voted unanimously to endorse Senator Jon Corzine in his bid for Governor. Senator Corzine thanked the delegates for their support and pledged to continue to fight for New Jersey's working families just as he has done in the U.S. Senate since his election in 2000. Delegates also voted to endorse Legislative candidates running across the state. For a complete list of endorsed candidates visit [www.njafclcio.org](http://www.njafclcio.org).

## HELP US HELP THEM!

All affiliates are strongly encouraged to provide updated membership rosters to the New Jersey State AFL-CIO in preparation for our program to help elect Jon Corzine as Governor, all endorsed legislative candidates and more than 50 rank-and-file members participating in this year's labor candidates program.

## WELCOME NEW AFFILIATES

The 740 members of the Part-Time Lecturer Faculty Chapter of the Rutgers University Council of the AAUP voted for joint affiliation with the AFT. This comes just months after 4,000 full-time faculty graduate employees and counselors at RU also voted overwhelmingly in favor of joint affiliation.

Nearly 50 members of IAFF Local 4408 of Mount Laurel and 74 members of IBB Local D-432 have affiliated with the New Jersey State AFL-CIO.

## CAFTA PASSES

The House of Representatives narrowly passed CAFTA on Wednesday, July 26, 2005. This flawed trade deal is bad for workers both here and abroad and is expected by many to have the same damaging effects as NAFTA. The New Jersey State AFL-CIO applauds all seven Democratic Congressman as well as Republicans Frank LoBiondo (R-2), Chris Smith (R-4) and Scott Garrett (R-5) for choosing the workers they represent over the pressures of the White House and voting against this measure.

## Upcoming Events

- |                 |  |
|-----------------|--|
| August 19       | OSHEP Public Program<br>Motor Vehicle Safety<br>Rutgers Labor Education Center |
| September 13    | OSHEP Health & Safety Conference<br>East Brunswick Hilton                      |
| September 29-30 | Legislative Conference<br>Tropicana Casino & Resort<br>Atlantic City           |

- NJ State AFL-CIO: The Voice for Working Families in New Jersey -

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**SUMMER RECESS LEGISLATIVE WRAP-UP:  
2004-2005 SESSION**

SUMMER "TAKE ACTION" LEGISLATIVE SPOTLIGHT:

**NEW JERSEY UNION MEMBERS URGE CONGRESS TO ACT ON EMPLOYEE FREE CHOICE ACT  
HERE'S YOUR CHANCE TO BE HEARD!**

On Monday, June 27, 2005 the New Jersey State AFL-CIO hosted a Congressional Forum on the Employee Free Choice Act at the Statehouse in Trenton. Held at the direction of Representative George Miller (D-CA), Ranking Minority Member of the House Committee on Education and Workforce, this was the first in a series of similar events that are expected to be held across the country. The overwhelming success of this Forum certainly set a high standard for all future Congressional Forums on this important piece of legislation.

Congressman Rob Andrews (D-1), Ranking Minority Member of the Subcommittee on Employer/Employee Relations was joined on the panel by fellow Committee Member Rush Holt (D-12). Also participating were Congressmen Bob Menendez (D-13), Frank Pallone (D-6) and Steve Rothman (D-9). All five Congressmen, as well as Congressmen Bill Pascrell (D-8) and Donald Payne (D-10) have voiced their support for this measure.

During the hearing, workers representing various unions testified about their desire to form a union and recounted stories of threats, intimidations and firings that occurred during their organizing campaign. The workers spoke on behalf of UNITE HERE Local 54, UNITE HERE Metropolitan Joint Board, Teamsters Local 11, CWA 1037 and JNESO District Council 1. Following their testimony, the witnesses also took questions from the Congressmen, providing further support for the need for this legislation. New Jersey State Senator Bob Smith (D-17) and Assemblyman Joe Egan (D-17), sponsors of New Jersey's card-check legislation, also testified at the hearing.

The New Jersey State AFL-CIO encourages all members to contact their Congressman and ask them to support this important legislation which protects workers' rights to organize. Please visit [www.njafclcio.org](http://www.njafclcio.org) and click on "Write your U.S. Representative" to send an automatic fax to your Congressman urging him to support the Employee Free Choice Act. For more information please contact Steve Lenox, Legislative Affairs Coordinator at 609-989-8730.

SIGNED INTO LAW:

**MINIMUM WAGE INCREASED TO \$7.15 AN HOUR**

On April 12, 2005 labor leaders, workers and legislators from across the state joined Governor Codey at a ceremony marking the signing of legislation increasing the minimum wage to \$7.15 an hour. New Jersey's minimum wage, which was among the nation's highest in the early nineties had stayed steady for nearly 15 years while the cost of living in our state increased by 30%.

Senator Stephen Sweeney (D-3), Assembly Speaker Albio Sires (D-33) and Assemblyman Michael Panter (D-12) sponsored this legislation in their respective houses once again showing their commitment to New Jersey's working families. The New Jersey State AFL-CIO and our affiliates were pleased to see that this legislation passed both the Senate and the Assembly with significant bipartisan support. To see how your legislators voted on this issue please visit [www.njafclcio.org](http://www.njafclcio.org) and click on Legislative Archives.

**NEW JERSEY BECOMES FIRST STATE IN NATION TO PROHIBIT  
'OFF SHORING' OF STATE FUNDED SERVICE CONTRACTS**

Less than a month after acting to increase New Jersey's minimum wage, Governor Codey once again supported New Jersey's working families by prohibiting the 'off shoring' of state funded service contracts. This legislation, sponsored by Senator Shirley Turner (D-15) and Assemblyman Reed Gusciora (D-15), will help to level the playing field between corporations that choose to create jobs in America and those that increase profits by utilizing lower wage workers in foreign countries. The New Jersey State AFL-CIO is proud of the efforts put forth by our affiliates as part of our intensive lobbying effort in support of this initiative.

The 'outsourcing' of American jobs to foreign labor markets, where workers receive drastically reduced wages, and few, if any benefits and protections, has become a more common practice by American corporations in the past ten years. Studies have shown that this practice has led to a decline in workers wages in America and it is believed that if this trend continues more than 3 million jobs will be lost by 2015. These lost wages also amount to decreased tax revenues collected by the state and federal governments while increasing the number of displaced workers seeking public welfare benefits.

To see how your legislators voted on this issue please visit [www.njafclcio.org](http://www.njafclcio.org) and click on Legislative Archives.

#### **NURSE STAFFING DISCLOSURE**

A-1727, sponsored by Assemblyman Sam Thompson (R-13) and Assemblywoman Loretta Weinberg (D-37) requires hospitals and nursing homes to compile and provide certain information to the public. Most notably, this information will include the number of registered professional nurses, licensed practical nurses, and certified nursing aides and the ratio of patients to each.

The New Jersey State AFL-CIO supported this bill along with several of our affiliates believing that making this information available and accessible to the general public will offer healthcare consumers additional opportunities to make informed decisions about where they seek medical care and nursing home services.

#### **UNEMPLOYMENT BENEFITS FOR LOCKED OUT WORKERS**

New Jersey became the 23rd state in the nation to grant unemployment benefits to "locked out" workers on June 27, 2005. This legislation, sponsored by Senator Stephen Sweeney and Assemblyman John Wisniewski will provide relief to workers who have agreed to continue working under the terms of an existing contract, but the employer chooses to impose terms not contained therein.

The New Jersey State AFL-CIO believes that workers should not have to suffer financial hardship due to the actions of an employer who is unwilling to allow workers to serve at their contractually agreed upon compensation, was proud to take a leading role in support of this issue, and applauds all of the lawmakers that supported this measure.

To see how your legislators voted on this issue please visit [www.njafclcio.org](http://www.njafclcio.org) and click on Legislative Archives.

#### **EXISTING STRUCTURE FOR COLLECTIVE NEGOTIATION UNITS NOW LAW**

For more than 30 years, there have been broad based collective negotiation units for the employees in the Executive Branch of the State government. This law, sponsored by Assembly Speaker Albio Sires (D-33) and Senator Joe Vitale (D-19) protects this structure which has contributed to the stability of labor relations between public employees and the Executive Branch and served to avoid disruption of services to the public.

#### **GOVERNOR CODEY SIGNS CARD CHECK LEGISLATION**

A-1820 (Egan/Van Drew) and S-194 (Smith), bills which will allow certain workers not covered under the National Labor Relations Act to form and join unions by signing authorization cards has been signed by Governor Codey. This "card check" legislation allows workers to exercise their right to union representation without being subjected to the lengthy, often contentious, union election drives which allow employers to threaten, intimidate and harass workers into voting "no".

Through the strong lobbying efforts of the New Jersey State AFL-CIO and our affiliates, this legislation received strong bipartisan support in both houses. Voting in favor were all 47 Democrats and 8 Republicans (Baroni, Blee, Conover, Dancer, Gibson, Kean, Malone, Thompson) in the Assembly and all 21 Democrats present and 3 Republicans (Asselta, Gormley, Singer) in the Senate.

To see how your legislators voted on this issue please visit [www.njafclcio.org](http://www.njafclcio.org) and click on Legislative Archives.

**HEALTH COVERAGE FOR UNION OFFICERS AND EMPLOYEES**

Under a new law signed by Governor Codey earlier this month, local union affiliates representing state employees may elect to enroll their officers and staff in the State Health Benefits Plan. This bill was sponsored by Assembly Speaker Albio Sires and Assembly members Joe Malone and Bonnie Watson Coleman as well as Senators Joe Vitale and Diane Allen.

ON THE GOVERNOR'S DESK**LOSS RATIO**

Legislation requiring health insurers that cover certain behavioral health care services to disclose certain information to their customers. In short, this bill, sponsored by Assemblywoman Loretta Weinberg (D-37) and Senator Joe Coniglio (D-36), would increase the ability of health care consumers to determine how many of their premium dollars are being applied towards direct care. The New Jersey State AFL-CIO believes that this legislation is an important part of our efforts to increase the availability and affordability of health care services to our members and all New Jersey residents and was proud to support this measure in both the Assembly and the Senate.

PASSED ONE HOUSE

**SLAPP Legislation** (A-1077: Cryan)- 'SLAPP' lawsuits are used by private entities in an effort to silence critics. This bill will allow for the dismissal of 'SLAPP' lawsuits if the plaintiff fails to show that they can prevail on the merits, limits discovery while a court considers a motion to dismiss, and allows courts to award attorneys' fees and damage to victims. This bill passed the Assembly but has not yet been introduced in the Senate.

**Requires Release of Bid List Prior to Bid Date** (A-2372:Egan./Chivukula & S-2556: Sweeney): This bill has passed the Assembly and is pending in the Senate Community and Urban Affairs Committee.

**Enhances Rights and Remedies of Employees Who Disclose or Refuse to Participate in Fraudulent Employer Practices** (S-1886: Sweeney & A-764: Cohen/Conaway) This bill has passed the Senate and is pending in the Assembly Labor Committee.

OTHER LEGISLATIVE ISSUES

**Transportation Trust Fund (TTF) Renewal:** New Jersey is about to "face a transportation meltdown," according to a statement made this month by an official at the Regional Plan Association and author of the most recent study of the state Transportation Trust Fund, the state's primary fund for repairing roads and bridges. In fact, the fund will literally "run dry" by July 2006 when 100% of remaining funds will go toward debt service. In addition to the dramatic economic losses associated with this "meltdown" as well as the negative effects on everyday New Jerseyans quality of life, a failure to reinvest in the transportation infrastructure will threaten the creation of thousands of jobs statewide. The New Jersey State AFL-CIO endorses the recommendations made by the Blue Ribbon Commission on New Jersey's Transportation System issued in 2003 and believes our elected officials must act now to renew the TTF.

**School Construction:** Governor Codey recently passed reform initiatives aimed at reviving the School Construction Corporation (SCC) and the agency will benefit from the strong new management and leadership from former PSE&G CEO Al Koeppe. The continued rehabilitation and construction of New Jersey's schools is a top priority for working families and the children of New Jersey, and developing a stable source for future funding is a priority for the New Jersey State AFL-CIO.

**WARN Act Expansion:** The New Jersey State AFL-CIO is spearheading a lobbying campaign in conjunction with our industrial union affiliates in support of A-3417 /S-2064, which would expand and strengthen the WARN Act notification procedure for certain plant closings resulting in mass layoffs. Both prime sponsors, Assemblyman Jeff Van Drew and Senator Steve Sweeney have been staunch advocates of the bill, which was approved by both the Assembly and Senate Labor Committee.