

PAC Report

4/16/2009 - Cheryl A. Felice, President

April 14, 2009

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Dear AME PAC Members and Unit Presidents,

As the Chair of one of the most powerful union organizations in New York, the Public Employees Conference (PEC and AME Lobbyist), a consortium of approximately 60 public employee unions in NYS representing over 1.1 million members, Pete Meringolo has reported that PEC's intense lobbying efforts were indeed rewarded with the removal of the proposed Tier 5 from the state's budget.

PEC was also successful in convincing our Albany leaders to reject a \$1 tax per claim on our Health and Welfare funds, which could have resulted in an additional \$1 paid on every doctor visit and every prescription filled!

However, Pete cautiously reminds us, together with all of our union brothers and sisters, that if any of us think we have achieved a total victory and that these callous proposals are going to disappear for good – we just need to look at all the media attacks on the very benefits that public employees throughout the state currently receive.

It is easy to recognize whose side the newspapers are on, and we know who controls the media. It appears that the only newspaper willing to print the truth is The Chief, a weekly newspaper specifically addressing civil service employees (thechief-leader.com). In fact, the article that appeared in the March 20, 2009 edition, written by Richard Steier and entitled, Christmas Bonuses and Other Wicked Fables, truthfully explains the real story behind the Variable Supplement Funds, a current benefit for Police and Firefighters. The only problem is that the majority of taxpayers do not subscribe to The Chief, and the only version they hear is the one which repeats itself almost weekly – telling them that the taxpayers are paying for our benefits without explaining the contract concessions and adjustments that were made over the years to secure them!

In light of this continual assault against labor, Pete has called a mandatory meeting for all PEC Presidents to discuss, and vote, on how PEC will proceed in the coming months and in the future. AME's negotiating team recently attended PEC's Annual Legislative Agenda Conference. Pete recognizes that our union benefits are in jeopardy and we, as a powerful voice, must meet to discuss strategy and develop a unified PEC position. This is how unions can become pro-active! Pete does not believe that PEC should sit idly by and read article after article attacking public employees and retirees.

It is for this reason, to seek important input from PEC members, that Pete has scheduled a meeting on Tuesday, April 28, 2009 at 12 noon at the offices of Uniformed Firefighters' Association, 204 E. 23rd St., 4th Floor, NYC. Pete will report back to AME, and we will continue to report back to our members.

With united purpose,
Cheryl A. Felice
President

Cc: Executive Board
Debra Alloncius, AME Legislative Director
AME PAC Committee