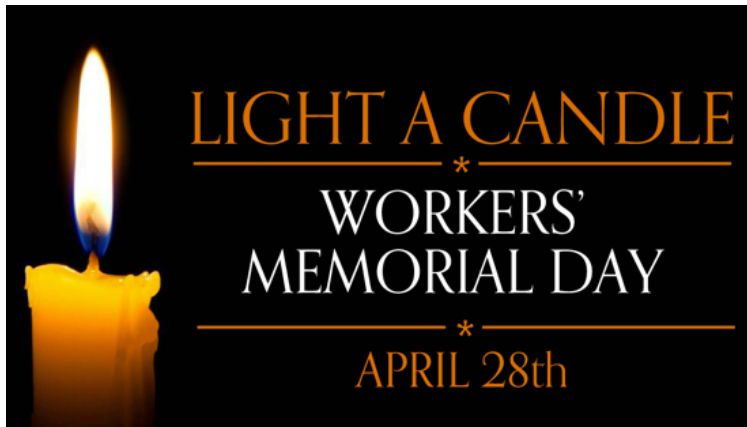


# Newsletter of the AFL-CIO

## Central New York Labor Council

Serving the Mohawk Valley since 1882

### April 2014



### *Join us to honor our fallen brother and sister workers*

Monday, April 28th, is National Workers' Memorial Day. On the preceding **THURSDAY, APRIL 24**, members and friends of the Central New York Labor Council will gather at 5pm around our Workers Monument at the west end of Ilion Memorial Park in Ilion. We'll be there to remember fellow workers who have left us during the past year and to reaffirm our pledge to work for ALL workers, here and everywhere. It's a fight and it won't be over until the dignity of work is recognized universally by safe work places and fair compensation and benefits for all workers. It is a special and always moving event. We invite any union members to come and be a part of something bigger than any individual. If you have never visited our Workers Memorial, do yourself a favor and join us. The monument boasts a number of plaques representing the many facets of organized labor. Around it is a walkway made of bricks, many of which are engraved to

#### **WORKERS MEMORIAL DAY**

**SAFE JOBS  
SAVE LIVES**

**OUR WORK'S NOT DONE.**

remember union members who have passed on or who have been specially recognized by their individual locals. It's a special place. After a candle-lighting ceremony at the monument, we'll head over to Francesca's at 144 E. Main St. in Ilion for a brief remembrance of specific individuals followed by food and fellowship. All of us have lost special friends or family members who valued their work and their coworkers. This is a chance to salute them either quietly in the memories of your heart or more publically by recalling them to a group that certainly shares your affection and appreciation for those workers who came before us and on whose shoulders we all stand.



## **This Newsletter must be shared with rank & file!!!**

The whole purpose of the Labor Council publishing a regular newsletter is to inform ALL workers in our affiliated locals of important issues that confront all of us in the labor community. That leaves all local leaders with a special responsibility... namely to insure that your members get to see it. The best way to do this is to EMAIL it directly to your members. It's also important to post it on your website --- but please, do that in addition to emailing it to your members. And tell them to share it widely.

## Mario Cilento comes to Utica

by Norma Chrisman, MVCCPA

New York State AFL-CIO President Mario Cilento spoke to the CNY Labor Council on March 21, 2014.

President Cilento told the group that included trades unionists, educators, manufacturing locals and service employee representatives that any success the NYS AFL-CIO enjoys is in direct correlation to the



work that local labor councils do. He added that the membership of the state AFL-CIO is diverse and that our diversity includes more than race. The AFL is diverse in the sectors represented (public, private and building trades), regions of the state represented, and religions represented. That's good because our diversity gives us greater strength as a labor movement.

Last year, the AFL-CIO was instrumental in getting legislation passed to increase unemployment insurance from the maximum amount of \$425 that was set in 1999. As a result, unemployment insurance will increase by 75% over the next 13 years to \$768. After 2027, the unemployment insurance will be indexed at 50% of average weekly wages and thereafter will no longer require specific legislative action to increase. Legislation was also passed to increase the current workers compensation rate of \$100 to \$150.

The AFL-CIO statewide campaign, "Get Out to Vote", was instrumental during the recent elections in approving bills for casino gaming and land swap bills. The approval of the casino gaming bills will create new industries and more long term jobs for a variety of locals throughout the state. The land swap bill allowed for land in the Adirondacks to be transferred to NYCO Minerals in exchange for a larger tract that was returned to the park. As a result, over a hundred good union jobs were saved. In a follow-up poll, the membership voted 67% to 33% in favor of the casino

gaming bill and 70% to 30% in favor of the land swap bill. Union folks helping union folks. President Cilento affirmed that "we know we make a difference!"

We need to continue to show that there is "no daylight between the state AFL-CIO and the local AFL-CIO" central bodies. We also need to hold the state and private corporations responsible and accountable for their actions. In 2013, 46% of the monies given to industrial development agencies (IDAs) did not establish new permanent jobs or implement plans for the creation of future permanent jobs as they are charged to do.

At the time of his visit, efforts were in full swing to finalize the state budget and the state AFL was hard at work trying to influence various elements in the budget. The AFL was opposing pending legislation aimed at freezing property taxes and linking the cuts with the consolidation of municipal services... consolidation of services that would mean a loss of jobs. [Note: Unfortunately the linkage was included in the final 2014-15 budget.] The state AFL was also strongly promoting the Safe Patient Handling Bill in light of the fact that the majority of workers compensation claims are related to the injuries in the medical field followed closely by injuries in the construction field. [Thankfully the bill was passed.]



Organized labor stands strong against efforts to roll-back NYS's Scaffold Law that places the responsibility for safety in elevated construction in the hands of project owners and general contractors so that there is no ambiguity in determining who is accountable





for maintaining a safe workplace in very dangerous occupations. Opponents argue that the law hurts women and minority-owned businesses. President Cilento stated that the opponents are becoming more organized and are willing to spend more and more money but do not speak the truth. We have the facts about how many employees are injured on the job. He stated that opponents are more interested in the employer than the employee who bears all the risk in elevated construction. He pledged that “we will continue to fight”. [So far the rollback has not passed either house.]

United Mine Workers member Rusty Brown stated that there is a disconnect in regards to firearms because of the Safe Act. He stated that 1200 union jobs are at risk at Remington Arms in Ilion. The UMWA local there typically supports Democratic candidates but it seems that the Republican-elected officials are being more supportive of their local’s position on this issue. President Cilento commented that the AFL-CIO will work with both parties to support our membership in retaining and creating jobs in state as well as the safety and security of our members.



When asked about public education funding, President Cilento stated that the “governor is aware that he is not popular with teachers.” Cherie Grant, President of the Utica Teachers Association, stated that the district is expecting layoffs which will increase class sizes because of the lack of funding for public education. President Cilento reinforced that the delinking of property taxes and consolidation of services is a priority.



Pat Costello thanked President Cilento and urged that “we need to take credit for what we do. We should not be ashamed or embarrassed that we have pensions and benefits. We worked hard to get them.” In a just world, everyone deserves the same.

## ***New leadership at NYSUT***

At its Representative Assembly in New York City last week, delegates of the New York State United Teachers elected a new leadership team headed by president Karen Magee. The contested election for officers stemmed in part from the dissatisfaction of many K-12 teachers at the imposition of a new Annual Professional Performance Review by the Governor and the State Education Department that relies heavily on high-stakes standardized testing in all grades. Now past-president Dick Ianuzzi had negotiated with the governor to establish a 40% limit to the impact of student performance on teacher evaluations (rather than hold firm in opposition) and that action fueled the ire of many classroom teachers who found the agreement reached with the Governor totally unacceptable. The result was the election result described above.

In a letter to the membership, new president Karen Magee stated “We will *forcefully and specifically communicate the impact his [Governor Cuomo’s] harmful policies are having on our members and our communities, and push for the changes we are collectively demanding. As I said at the RA, we will defend public education and public service. Period!*”



She added “*With great support from NYSUT staff, we are hard at work. In our first week, we began developing NYSUT’s next budget with a focus on maximizing resources and minimizing expenses. We are dedicated to ensuring NYSUT’s continued financial health, strengthening transparency, and making sure your dues dollars are used wisely. We will be traveling to every corner of the state to meet with you, our members, and every NYSUT constituency so that our collective wisdom and experience can shape the future of NYSUT. Above all, we are committed to serving every member, leader and local.*”

NYSUT represents approximately 600,000 teachers (K-12 and higher ed), support personnel, nurses, and others) throughout the state. Many are unhappy with the governor’s heavy-handed approach to dealing with educational issues (funding, charter schools, testing, etc.) and this new NYSUT leadership team promises a more proactive and aggressive approach to dealing with such issues. It’s important to note that the message of the final day of the RA is that “We are united!”

Below is a message I received from Cherie Grant, President of the Utica Teachers Association. Following that is a way all of us in the labor movement can help the Utica teachers.

*Thank you so much for taking the time to sign the NO NEW CHARTER SCHOOLS FOR UTICA petition; to date, yours is one of over 1,200 signatures! This massive support for the petition demonstrates wide support for our public schools. While this petition is a great start, we must continue to make our voices heard by those that will decide the future of the proposed Mohawk Valley Community Charter School. To that end, I call upon you to contact the SUNY Charter Schools Institute (the first body that will evaluate the charter application), and carry the message that Utica does not want or need, and can not afford another charter school!*

*Below is a list of email addresses for the staff at the SUNY Charter School Institute as well as a sample email that you can use to make your opposition to the Mohawk Valley Community Charter School known. The phone number for the Institute's Albany office is also provided and I urge you to also (should you want to) make a phone call to express your opposition. Let us stand together and speak with one voice in saying: NO NEW CHARTER SCHOOLS FOR UTICA! Thank you for your time and support of our public schools. In Solidarity, Cherie Grant, Utica Teachers Association President*

**SUNY Charter School Institute Phone #: (518) 445-4250**

**Directions for sending the email:**

- 1. Copy and paste these addresses below into the address bar of an email.**
- 2. Copy and paste the text below or write your own thoughts or feelings.**
- 3. Sign and send!**

**Email addresses for the Staff of the SUNY Charter Schools Institute.**

<susanmiller.barker@suny.edu>, <barbara.acenowr@suny.edu>, <aaron.campbell@suny.edu>, <kathryn.connell@suny.edu>, <shawn.davis@suny.edu>, <john.flack@suny.edu>, <carrie.gee@suny.edu>, <mari.hollingsworth@suny.edu>, <natasha.howard@suny.edu>, <catherine.kramer@suny.edu>, <ron.miller@suny.edu>, <maureen.murphy@suny.edu>, <lynn.nichols@suny.edu>, <andrea.richards@suny.edu>, <ralph.rossi@suny.edu>, <jeffrey.wasbes@suny.edu>, <heather.wendling@suny.edu>

**SAMPLE EMAIL BELOW:**

*Attention Staff of the SUNY Charter Schools Institute:*

*This email is to voice my vehement opposition to the Full Charter Application which was submitted by the proposed Mohawk Valley Community Charter School, on March 12, 2014.*

*As a New York State citizen and a stakeholder in the success of our public schools I hold great concern about inadequate and unpredictable public school funding, the reduction of professional and support staff, and the reduction or elimination of programs and services for children served by our public schools. While a growing number of students in the Mohawk Valley come from homes crippled by poverty, massive budget cuts have prevented our public schools from providing those most vulnerable students with the quality education to which they are constitutionally entitled.*

*The establishment of the the Mohawk Valley Community Charter School will result in a sizable loss of funding to the Utica City School District and other area public schools at a time when these schools are already in dire need of additional state aid.*

*I respectfully urge you to place the proposal for the Mohawk Valley Community Charter School, on indefinite hold. All students hold a right to a quality education, and the Mohawk Valley Community Charter School will deprive many of this right. Thank you for your time and consideration in this important matter.*

*Sincerely,*



# Some scenes from the St. Patty's Day Gala Parade



The folks from LIUNA were on hand



Dave Millbower (CWA) & Dave Bartlett (Printers) lead the way.



**THE LABOR MOVEMENT**  
"The folks who brought you the weekend."



Our UMWA driver



Candy for all.



CNY Labor Council President Pat Costello





### *Some of the St. Patty's Day labor contingent.*

#### **Organized labor is under attack**

If anyone ever says voting doesn't make a difference, here are two words you can say in reply... "Supreme Court." If for no other reason than the fact that the president makes appointments to the highest court, exercising your vote thoughtfully every time there is an election is extremely important. In recent years the right wing majority of the Roberts court has time and again decided cases in favor of corporations, business, and the wealthy at the expense of working people and the poor. Two of three cases of special interest to those of us in the labor movement have already been decided, *Citizens United* and *McCutcheon*. The third, *Harris v. Quinn*, is pending and the potential impact is huge.

According to the Center for Public Integrity, the 2010 *Citizens United* decision "tossed out the corporate and union ban on making independent expenditures and financing electioneering communications. It gave corporations and unions the green light to spend unlimited sums on ads and other political tools, calling for the election or defeat of individual candidates." Note that corporations and unions are placed on an equal footing even though the amounts of money able to be provided by each are vastly different. Plus, corporations and businesses lobby simply to maximize their profits, eliminate any restrictions that may cut into those profits or hold them accountable for what they do, and to enrich their leaders. Unions, on the other hand, lobby for the betterment of conditions in the workplace and for a better, fairer deal for real people. They have very different missions.

In essence, "the high court's 5-4 decision in *Citizens*

*United* said that it is OK for corporations and labor unions to spend as much as they want to convince people to vote for or against a candidate." Because of vast differences in monetary resources, it doesn't level the playing field. Rather it skews it way over to the side of big business and industry.

The recent *McCutcheon* decision took *Citizens United* a step further and overturned limits on aggregate federal campaign contributions. Individuals can still give up to \$2600 to an individual politician's campaign but now no longer have an aggregate limit on what they can give during any election cycle. According to Chief Justice John Roberts "The government may no more restrict how many candidates or causes a donor may support than it may tell a newspaper how many candidates it may endorse." So now, the sky's the limit... but that sky is MUCH higher for the wealthiest among us than it is for folks like you and me. An even playing field, I don't think so.

That brings me to *Harris v. Quinn*, a case that threatens the existence of the "agency shop", something that is especially important public sector unions.

According to *The Nation*, "a union wins the right to be the exclusive collective bargaining representative for workers in a particular unit by demonstrating its support by a majority of the workers in the unit. But the law also imposes a duty with this right. The union must represent all workers, union members and nonunion employees alike, when it negotiates and administers collective bargaining agreements. Thus it is theoretically possible for nonunion employees to capture the benefits of collective bargaining won by their union colleagues (often at considerable expense) but pay nothing for it."

Unions have been able to limit this “free-rider” problem by negotiating language requiring such free-riders to pay their “fair share” of the union’s costs. Members do this by paying dues. Nonmembers pay an “agency fee” for the representation and protection they enjoy. Until now, the Supreme Court has upheld the validity of this agency fee concept. The one limitation is that nonmembers are required to pay only for the costs of negotiating and administering collective bargaining agreements. Other union activities such as organizing, lobbying, public education, and participation in election are not covered in the agency fee.

The contention in *Harris v. Quinn* is that for public employees, all union activities are “political” since even bargaining for wages and benefits results in taxes to pay for the provisions of the negotiated agreement. The contention is that the agency fee must therefore be abolished in public unions because all activities are political. If the 5 members of the conservative Roberts’ majority votes as a bulk, free-riders in public bargaining units will be resurrected, agency fee will disappear, and members will bear ALL the costs of representing these freeloaders.

***Want to protect your job  
for the long-term?***

***Get involved with your local,  
Learn about all labor issues (not  
just yours), register to vote, and  
VOTE in every election.***

### ***Some stuff you just can’t make up.***

“So when Alan Greenspan was testifying before Congress in 1997 on the marvels of the economy he was running, he said straight out that one of the bases for its economic success was imposing what he called “*greater worker insecurity*.” If workers are more insecure, that’s very “healthy” for the society, because if workers are insecure they won’t ask for wages, they won’t go on strike, they won’t call for benefits; they’ll serve the masters gladly and passively. And that’s optimal for corporations’ economic health.”

**Noam Chomsky**

***Leaders... Share this newsletter  
with your members.  
Members... Share it with your  
family, friends, and co-workers***



### ***CSEA worker memorial ceremony & tree planting***

The CSEA Central Region Safety & Health Committee will be holding a Workers Memorial Day observance and memorial tree planting ceremony on **Monday, April 28** at noon outside the DOT Fleet Administration and Support Building, 10 Harbor Lock Road West, Utica, N.Y. 13502. Any union members are welcome to attend. The ceremony should last only 15-20 minutes.

### ***More stuff you can’t make up***

Marc Dubin, Director of Advocacy for the Center for Independent Living of South Florida, which serves people with disabilities in Miami-Dade County, asked the Elections Department of Miami-Dade county if restrooms at polling places were accessible for people with disabilities. He said his objective was to get the county to check the restrooms and make arrangements for locations where they weren’t accessible.

### ***And the response...***

Assistant County Attorney Shanika Graves states that “the [Elections] Department’s policy is **not to permit access to restrooms at polling sites on election days**. ... This policy was implemented to avoid situations where accessible restrooms would be available to some, but not all voters.”

I guess that means voters in Miami-Dade better not drink the day they vote because a several hour wait in line could prove unpleasant. Makes you wonder where the waits are longest in the county, affluent white polling places or poor minority sites.

## Notable Quotes

*“What world are the five conservative Supreme Court justices living in? To equate the ability of billionaires to buy elections with ‘freedom of speech’ is totally absurd. The Supreme Court is paving the way toward an oligarchic form of society in which a handful of billionaires like the Koch brothers and Sheldon Adelson will control our political process.”*



US Senator Bernie Sanders,  
Independent from Vermont

*“The disastrous 2010 Supreme Court ruling in Citizens United threw out campaign funding laws that limited what wealthy individuals and corporations could spend on elections,” he has argued. “Since that ruling, campaign spending by Adelson, the Koch brothers and a handful of other billionaire families has fundamentally undermined American democracy. If present trends continue, elections will not be decided by one-person, one-vote, but by a small number of very wealthy families who spend huge amounts of money supporting right-wing candidates who protect their interests.”*

*“Clearly, if we are to retain the fundamentals of American democracy, we need to overturn the Supreme Court decision [Citizens United].”*

*“I vote for democracy!”*

**Note:** This is just the kind of straight, no nonsense talk working Americans and regular people who are struggling need to hear more of. Ask your representatives what they think of *Citizens United* and the more recent *McCutcheon* ruling? We should know their positions.

Thanks to UFCW Local One for in-house printing.

*We Entrust to Them  
Our Children to Teach  
Our Bodies to Heal  
Our Homes to Build  
Our Food to Provide  
Our Steel to Forge  
Our Clothes to Make  
Our Families to Guide  
Our Communities to Flourish  
Our Neighborhoods to be Safe  
Our Future to Secure*

*Dedicated to the Generations of  
Working Men and Women  
Of the Mohawk Valley  
Who, Through the Dignity  
of Their Work  
Made Us What We Are Today,  
The Keepers of Our Yesterdays,  
Todays and Tomorrows*

*Inscription on the CNY  
Workers Monument*

Check out the Labor Council web page... [cnylc.org](http://cnylc.org)

### *Up for a little poker?*

Don't forget the Labor Council's upcoming first-ever Poker Run (motorcycles and cars) planned for September. There will be details in the next issue.

### **Next Labor Council Meeting:**

**April 24** at 5pm, Ilion Memorial Park, Ilion and at 6pm at Francesca's. *Join us if you are able.*

**Are you thinking about contributing to the newsletter? Do you want to write an article about a topic important to you? You are welcome to submit something for publication.**

Contact: Bill Perrotti, Newsletter editor at

[bill.perrotti@yahoo.com](mailto:bill.perrotti@yahoo.com)