

# Newsletter of the AFL-CIO

## Central New York Labor Council

Serving the Mohawk Valley since 1882

May 2015



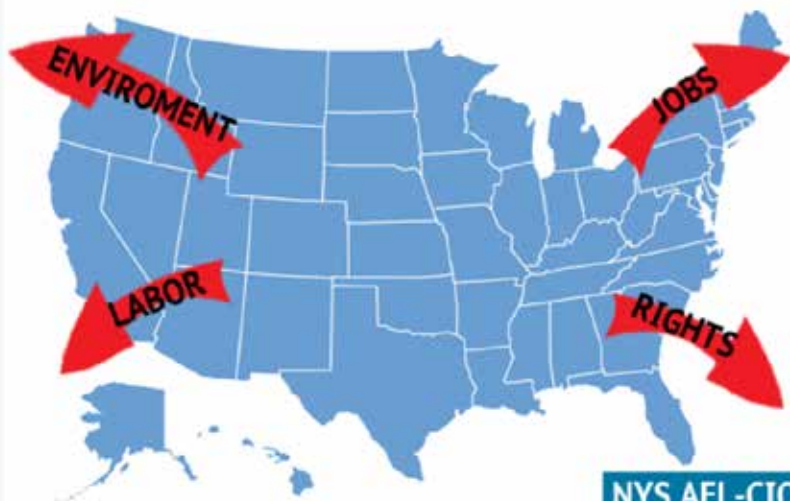
### Representing thousands of workers in central New York

#### *A trade deal that “improves” the economy is not necessarily a good thing*

As politicians discuss the TransPacific Partnership (TPP) that President Obama is pushing Congress so vigorously to pass, one comment surfaces time and again, namely, that the agreement will improve the US economy. Generally that means that big business will benefit, corporate profits will increase and with that the stock market will rise. A rise in the stock market is good news for corporations, especially the highest echelon of the corporate community



#### Fast Track = Outsourcing Of America



Take Action! Text TPP to 877877

who will experience a tremendous windfall as profits and executive compensation will predictably soar. An “improved” economy would also spell good news for stockholders who will see their investments bear fruit. And of course consumers would benefit from lower prices for goods they purchase because we are likely to be flooded with cheaper foreign goods. But that’s not the whole economy. For many Americans the most important element of the economy is JOBS. That’s what is missing from this “rush to TPP”... the fate of the worker. It’s the American worker who is forgotten or ignored in this whole free trade deal. It’s the American worker with a decent wage, benefits, and job protec-



tions who is the big loser. Past experience with similar trade pacts (NAFTA, CAFTA) shows that, while more money comes to the US, manufacturing leaves for venues where wages, benefits, and regulations (such as those protecting the environment and improving worker safety) are much less. And with the exodus of manufacturing go the jobs from US soil.

So now consider what is best for America.

Maybe rephrase the question as “What is the most patriotic approach to trade?”. As long as the current business climate continues to exist (a climate in which the greed of the wealthiest is unparalleled in history), free trade should be a non-starter. Currently in the US, the income ratio between corporate CEOs and average workers approaches 400:1. This is unconscionable. So much money concentrated at the top simply allows a small group to further enrich themselves and garner enormous power by essentially “buying” the political process. Thank the Citizens United Supreme Court case (possibly the worst court decision ever) for opening the floodgates for money to flow into politics and for the wealthiest among us to write the rules by which businesses must operate.

Case in point: The TPP was written in secret essentially by corporate lobbyists and representatives of the industries affected in the trade pact. Who but corporate executives and leaders of industry would include provisions in a trade agreement that would give a private corporation the right to sue a sovereign government because laws or governmental regulations are jeopardizing corporate profits. Who but these same corporate representatives would allow these disputes to be decided by a panel of corporate representatives. Who else would place such stringent secrecy requirements on the pending agreement so that public discourse is muted. Who else would cast the fate of American workers aside in the interest of amassing more and more profit. Seen in this light, the TPP and similar trade pacts are at best anti-American because they leave out of the mix the fate of the foundation of the US economy, namely the American worker. If the TPP passes, it's the worker who will either see jobs disappear or wages decline or both.

A look at the impact of NAFTA on manufacturing and jobs sends a chilling message about what to expect if this significantly larger trade agreement (TPP) is approved by Congress and then Fast Track authority to implement it is given to the president. There is no joy in this agreement for American workers and our representatives need to hear from all of us so that this free (but NOT fair) trade agreement is defeated.

SO WHAT CAN WE DO?

Go to the AFL-CIO web page and sign the petition against TPP and Fast Track authority:

<http://www.nofasttrack.com/#!/take-action>

Go the AFL-CIO website and call: **1-855-712-8441**. Your call will be routed to Senators Schumer and Gillibrand and you can either leave a message or talk to one of the their aides.

Contact your Representative Richard Hanna at 315-724-97400 (phone) or at 315-724-9746 (fax). You can also friend him on Facebook and leave him a message or find him on Twitter (@

[RepRichardHanna](#)). However you do it, he should hear from you all. Tell your friends, co-workers, and family members to do likewise.

**We must allact together and fight for the survival of US jobs and workers. Sadly our representatives often only do the right thing when the voices from the grassroots overpower the influence the persuasive power of corporate money. So we must let them hear those voices.**





## ***United Way's Day of Action is June 18 : Get your local involved***

The United Way's Day of Action is a great opportunity to get members of your local to participate in an effort to beautify Utica AND at the same time maybe get the name of your union out there for all to see. Check out the sponsorship opportunities below. It's fun work, it's important work, and it's a great way to start to change some minds about unions. Check out the info below and get involved. **Live United - Live Union!**

# BEAUTIFUL INITIATIVE


**4<sup>th</sup> ANNUAL United Way Day of Action**  
Thursday, June 18, 2015

Every year, United Way organizations throughout the country dedicate the longest day of the year, the Summer Solstice, to community service. For the past three years, United Way of the Valley & Greater Utica Area has worked with the City of Utica, Parkway Center and the Homeownership Center to host "Graffiti Busters" - an effort to reduce graffiti in the city of Utica.

This year, we're kicking it up a notch! The #1 way to reduce recitivism of graffiti is to replace it with something better - MURALS!

We began sprinkling murals throughout the city in 2014 with the "Welcome to Utica - Home of the Comets" mural on the Burrstone Road underpass and the "Communities that Play Together, Stay Together" mural on Oneida Street.

In 2015, for the 4th Annual United Way Day of Action, we'll make Utica Beautiful, by painting murals in the City of Utica Parks. Dugouts, field houses & pool houses will be designed with love by local illustrator, Caitlyn Knepek, and handpainted by volunteers.



**We invite everyone to take part in the**  
**BEAUTIFUL UTICA INITIATIVE.**

**SPONSOR A SPOT** - A customized illustration would allow your company logo and brand to be seen by thousands of people, throughout the lifetime of the murals.




**VOLUNTEER** - No artistic talent required! The murals will be drawn in "paint by number" format. Just come in your play clothes and fill in between the lines!

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**LIVE UNITED** and participate in this exciting, unique project that will make a difference and last for decades.

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## ***Labor representation on United Way Board & Executive Committee***

The relationship between the United Way of the Valley and Greater Utica (UWVGU) and the AFL-CIO Central NY Labor Council/Agency is alive and well these days. That hasn't always been the case. It wasn't all that long ago when labor was not represented at all on the UW board. Now the voice of labor is welcomed on the Board and by UWVGU Executive Director Brenda Episcopo and labor representatives play active roles in the United Way. In fact, the Labor Agency's Community Services Liaison Enesa Sabanagic spends one day each week in the UWVGU office working on labor-related UW initiatives. Recently Bill Perrotti, one of three labor representatives serving on the Board of Directors, has been selected as the labor representative on the UW Executive Committee. The other labor representatives on the United Way Board are Pat Costello and Michelle Mandia.

**UW + labor = Living United**

## Picking Up the Tab for Low Wages

*Note: This is a reprint of the editorial that appeared in the New York Times on May 1, 2015. It is so on point, I could not resist adding it to this month's newsletter. The graphs were obtained from the Economic Policy Institute and added by me.*

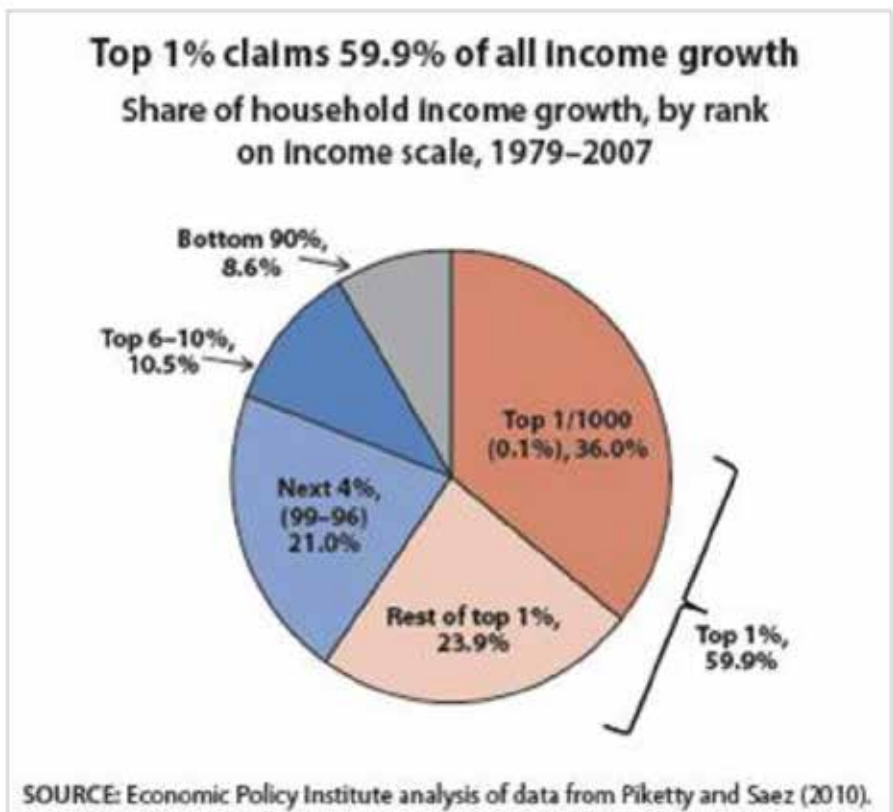
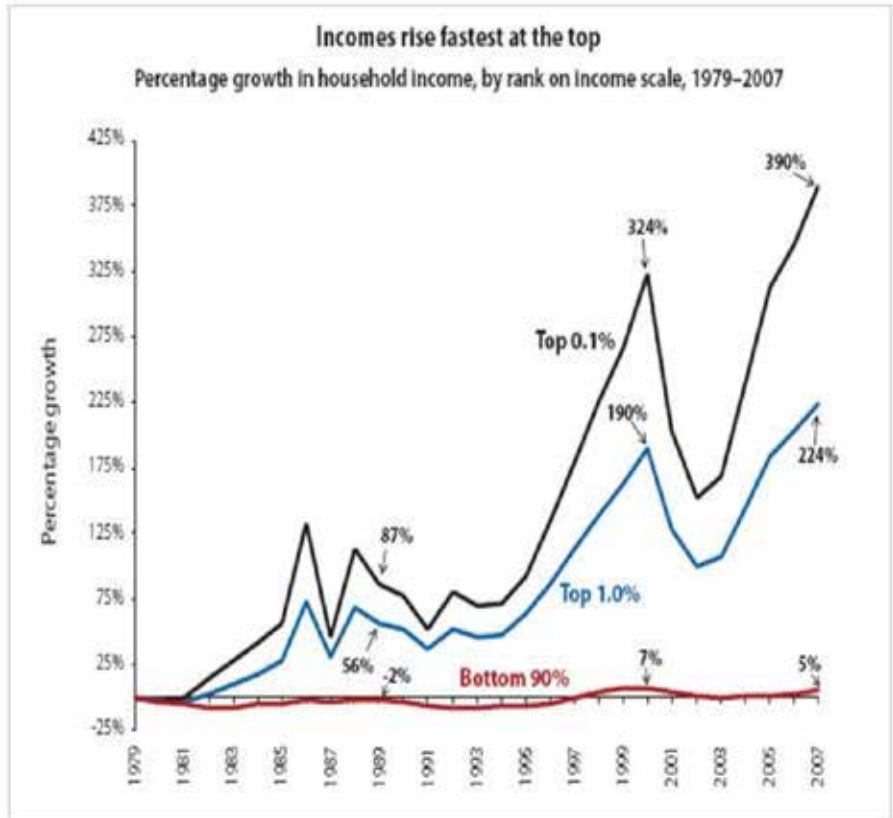
It is hard to overstate the extent to which work no longer results in a decent paycheck and a rising standard of living in this country. The portion of the economic pie that goes to working people is currently near the smallest on record, in data going back to 1947. Similarly, the gap between worker pay and labor productivity has widened since the 1970s. In a healthy economy, wages and productivity would rise in tandem, but in recent decades, productivity gains have flowed increasingly to executive compensation and shareholder returns, rather than wages.

These dynamics are not inevitable. Low-wage employers, in particular, pay low wages because they can and the main reason they can is that Congress has failed, over decades, to adequately update the minimum wage and other labor standards, including rules for overtime pay, employee benefits and union organizing.

That failure has had deep and perverse repercussions, extending beyond harming low-wage workers. As a recent report in The Times by Patricia Cohen explained, when work does not pay workers enough to get by, they are forced to rely on public assistance programs, mainly Medicaid, food stamps and low-earner tax credits.

Nearly three-fourths of the people helped by public aid for the poor are members of families headed by someone who works, according to a new study by the Berkeley Center for Labor Research and Education at the University of California. It estimates that state and federal governments spend more than \$150 billion a year on such aid.

In one respect, this shows that the safety net, though strained and inadequate, is



functioning. Low-earner tax credits, for instance, create an incentive to work by tying cash assistance to earnings. Other programs enable people to work by subsidizing health care, child care and transportation.

The problem is that as labor standards have eroded, allowing profitable corporations to pay chronically low wages, taxpayers are not only supporting the working poor, as intended, but also providing a huge subsidy for employers by picking up the difference between what workers earn and what they need to meet basic living costs. The low-wage business model has essentially turned public aid into a form of corporate welfare.

The best corrective is to raise the federal minimum wage. A new bill introduced on Thursday by congressional Democrats would lift the minimum from its current level of \$7.25 an hour to \$12 an hour by 2020. At that level, there would still be a need for public aid to ensure that some working families are kept out of poverty. But that aid would decline as take-home pay increases, leaving workers — and taxpayers — better off. If a higher minimum wage were coupled with increased tax credits for low earners, the poverty fighting effects of the higher minimum would be amplified, further reducing the need for workers to use public aid for food and health care.

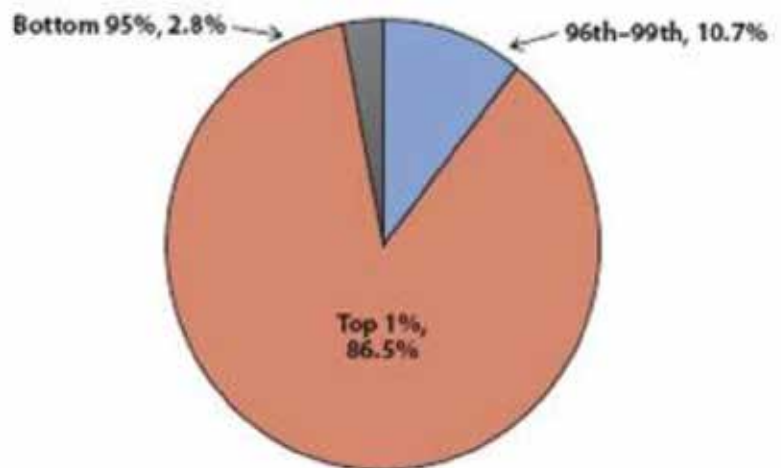
A handful of states are considering ways to recover public funds from low-wage employers, say, by requiring payment of a fee to the state for each worker who makes less than \$15 an hour. In 2016, California will start publishing the names of employers that have more than 100 employees on Medicaid and how much these companies cost the state in public aid.

Depressed wages are the result of outdated policies and lack of public awareness, that may, at long last, be changing for the better.



### Those with highest incomes gain disproportionate share of capital income growth

Share of total capital income growth claimed, by percentile rank in income, 1979–2007



SOURCE: Economic Policy Institute analysis of data from the Congressional Budget Office collection of data on effective federal tax.

### Correction

The April issue of the newsletter contained an item titled “*Replace Joe Griffo movement is gaining traction.*” The article described a grassroots movement currently afoot to defeat Senator Joe Griffo in the next election because of his support for Governor Cuomo’s education proposals. While the effort stems from the dissatisfaction of many NYSUT members and others concerned about the state of public education in NYS, the article may have given the false impression that the “Replace Joe Griffo” movement was official CNY Labor Council or the NYS AFL-CIO policy. **It is not.** It remains, however, a matter of real concern for supporters of public education.

**Replacing Mr. Griffo is neither Labor Council nor NYS AFL-CIO policy.**

**We apologize for inadvertently conveying an incorrect impression in the article.**



## ***Upcoming school budget votes are a great opportunity for labor solidarity***

On Tuesday, May 19, school budgets throughout the state will be up for votes and voters will decide the fate of academic programs, jobs, extracurriculars, etc. in the state's many school districts. Much of what follows is a condensation or modification of information available on the New York State United Teachers' website.

Since many NYSUT locals have been using phone banks and postcards in an effort to get voters to the polls, you may have already heard from some of your NYSUT brothers and sisters. This year more than ever it is important to pass local school budgets and

to elect individuals who are supportive of public education to local school boards. "Decisions are made by those who show up," said Andy Pallotta, NYSUT executive vice president. "Show up, participate and help make the decision about whether your community invests in your local public schools." So, as members of the larger labor movement, please vote on Tuesday to support public education, the kids who benefit from it, and your union brothers and sisters in public education.



The property tax cap put in place by the Cuomo administration three years ago has wreaked havoc on public school funding which needs revenues generated from property taxes. As society changes and the need for more and more student services increases, the adverse effects of inadequate funding are felt ever more acutely in all districts but most especially in poorer districts or those with more diverse student populations. Certainly the Utica and Rome districts are two very good examples of this. The tax cap limits school funding. Charter schools siphon money from public schools without lessening the burdens they bear to meet all state mandates. Positions are being cut at a time when more teachers, not fewer, are needed. Public education funding is becoming a race to the bottom. Fewer and fewer school districts are proposing budgets that would exceed the arbitrary and undemocratic tax cap. The first year the property tax cap was in place, 49 districts sought the 60 percent supermajority to exceed their tax levy limits, and 30 succeeded. The number has gone down each year. Last year, 24 districts proposed budgets that exceeded their tax levy limit, and 15 succeeded. The result is school districts are being forced to do with less and less each year when they actually need more in terms of personnel, program, and resources.

In a climate where the word "tax" is a negative, public education desperately needs citizens to step forward with "yes" votes on local school budgets especially when tax increases are proposed. When we were kids, our parents and other adults in our communities supported our school systems with "yes" votes so that we would benefit. Now it is our turn to do the same and "pay it forward."

In the meantime, NYSUT is appealing a recent State Supreme Court decision to dismiss the union's lawsuit challenging the tax cap and tax freeze. The union strongly believes the property tax cap and tax freeze are undemocratic and undermine local control of schools.

***Support your local public school.  
Vote "Yes" on Tuesday the 19th.***

## ***Cuomo pushing for public funds to support private schools.***

Recently Andrew Cuomo has been “touring” the state with Cardinal Timothy Dolan to gain support for the governor’s \$150 million tax credit proposal, called the Parental Choice in Education Act, for parochial school parents. The bill would provide tax credits of up to \$500 per student for parochial school parents with incomes under \$60,000, to help defray their tuition costs. It’s another example of siphoning public funds that should go to supporting the chronically underfunded public school system. As a way to garner some support from public school educators, the bill also provides a tax credit of up to \$200 to public and private school teachers to cover the cost of school supplies. In this bill individuals and businesses are eligible for a tax credit up to 75 percent for donations covering tuition scholarships. That is potentially a huge dollar figure that again reduces the money that would be available for public education. Public money should be used to support public schools. Period. Tell the governor and your representatives that you oppose this legislation. You can read more about this at: <http://www.nysut.org/news/2015/may/nysut-leaders-blast-governors-tax-credit>

## ***NYSUT’s Nine Point Plan to “Reclaim the Joy of Teaching and Learning”***

1. Don’t hold school aid hostage. Decouple school aid from the November 2015 deadline for APPR.
2. Retain local control and reject unfunded mandates. Repeal mandatory outside evaluators.
3. Student learning is more than a test score and we need an evaluation system that recognizes that fact. Decouple test scores from APPR. The federal government is moving in that direction and New York State should do the same. The tests coming from SED have been a debacle. No bubble test can measure a child’s curiosity. Use multiple measures to evaluate learning. Allow for achievement criteria (instead of only growth scores) in optional student assessment subcomponents (NYSUT’s APPR Task Force legislation).
4. If we’re serious about every child’s future, let’s get serious about doing what works. Support community schools legislation (Peoples-Stokes A.6791).
5. Support local decision-making in the hiring, tenure and disciplining of teachers. Repeal automatic or mandatory 3020a charges based upon unreliable ratings.
6. Allow struggling schools the time they need to succeed. Amend the receivership provision to give schools a true year or more to turn around and show improvement.
7. Reform the tax cap to allow for common sense exemptions or adjustments for things like enrollment growth.
8. Support and codify parents’ right to opt out of developmentally inappropriate tests (Nolan A.6777).
9. Enact and implement TRUE charter school accountability.

Here is the web address for NYSUT’s “Call Out Cuomo” video. It’s definitely worth a watch.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yvFxtEF2vW0#t=106>

**Local leaders... Don’t forget the  
Gompers dinner coming up in October.  
Decide NOW who your local will honor.**

**Contact Enesa Sabanagic at 315-735-6101 for any details or if you have questions. We would like to see as many locals as possible honoring members. Remember, Gompers night is our night to celebrate workers and the whole labor movement.**



## Saranac Thursday season is upon us

Thursday, May 21st, it all begins anew. By that I mean the new season of summer music. Plan to attend as many as you can and don't forget that part of every ticket goes to the United Way. That means that by enjoying Saranac Thursdays you are also helping all of the community agencies that the UWVGU funds. The proverbial win-win.

On June 4th, the CNY Labor Council will be pouring. See you then.

UNDERNEATH EVERYTHING WE ARE, UNDERNEATH EVERYTHING WE DO, WE ARE ALL PEOPLE. CONNECTED, INTERDEPENDENT, UNITED. AND WHEN WE REACH OUT A HAND TO ONE, WE INFLUENCE THE CONDITION OF ALL. THAT'S WHAT IT MEANS TO LIVE UNITED.



**Remember: On May 19th  
vote "YES" on your school budget  
& in Utica, also vote "YES" on the  
Kernan School Referendum**

### Cancellation

The showing of the film *Citizen Koch* at the Other Side, 2011 Genesee St, Utica  
[www.theothersideutica.org/](http://www.theothersideutica.org/)  
on Thursday, May 21 at 7:30PM has been **cancelled**.  
It will be rescheduled for June... We'll keep you updated on the new date and time.

*Thanks to UFCW Local One  
for in-house printing.*

**Contribute to the newsletter?  
Contact: [bill.perrotti@yahoo.com](mailto:bill.perrotti@yahoo.com)**

*The May Council meeting will be on  
Thursday, May 28th at 6PM.  
287 Genesee Street, Utica*

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