

CWA LOCAL 1032

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January 25, 2011

Dear CWA Local 1032 Member,

Greetings and Happy New Year! In my September letter I spoke directly about the challenges facing Local 1032 and working families in the current economic and political environment. I also spoke about my firm belief that the labor movement is our greatest hope for progressive change locally and nationally, as well as our shared responsibility as union members to fight for economic and social justice, and to join with other organizations that share our vision and our priorities for working families. As we prepare for a new year of challenges, I want to reflect on 2 significant moments this past fall that embody our commitments and our path forward.

On October 2nd, thousands of CWA members from New Jersey traveled to Washington to be a part of the ONE NATION march. Together with union members, the NAACP, and community organizations from across the country, over 200,000 of us sent a strong message that we want Washington to focus on core issues that matter to working families: putting America back to work, providing quality education for our children, and refocusing our nation's fiscal priorities on working families, not Wall Street.

Upon returning to New Jersey, we took the energy from the ONE NATION march into our electoral work. And in November, despite losses for Democrats across the country, 3 significant Democratic candidates were victorious in New Jersey thanks to the efforts of CWA and Local 1032. We helped to re-elect Congressmen Frank Pallone and Rush Holt, both of whom faced challenges from candidates far removed from the interests of working families. Most significantly, we worked tirelessly to elect Linda Greenstein to the State Senate in the 14th district in New Jersey. Not only did we unseat a Republican, we defeated a candidate hand picked by Governor Christie. In so doing, we sent a very strong message that CWA members will fight for candidates that take a stand for working families.

I do not mean to suggest that the ONE NATION march or our electoral victories in New Jersey signal an end to our struggles--quite the contrary. I mention these events as positive accomplishments for us as a Union to build upon as we prepare to continue our fight to strengthen the voice of working families. 2011 will present many challenges for the members of Local 1032, but if we reflect on these 2 moments, they provide an important message: if we come together in support of each other and our shared priorities and if we continue to build our Local through vigorous representation, organizing, and community and political action, we can – even in these difficult times – continue to build our movement. Our current power lies in these efforts and our future power depends upon it.

Building that power will be critical to meeting the challenges of the coming year. Over the last twelve months, we have seen an escalation in the anti-public worker and anti-union rhetoric that has become all too familiar. In a recent article, former Labor Secretary Robert Reich articulated the reasons for this strategy from the Right. Reich made clear what we have experienced first-hand in New Jersey – that public servants are convenient scapegoats. According to Reich, “Republicans would rather deflect attention from corporate executive pay that continues to rise as corporate profits soar. . . . They don't

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want stories about Wall Street bonuses, now higher than before taxpayers bailed out the Street . . . It's far more convenient to go after people who are doing the public's work – sanitation workers, police officers, fire fighters, teachers, social workers, federal employees – to call them 'faceless bureaucrats' and portray them as hooligans who are making off with your money and crippling federal and state budgets.”

We have seen this logic first hand in New Jersey as, the Governor would have us believe, public workers have become the cause of all the state's ills. That narrative has made it possible to attack the things we believe in most and the things we have fought for over the years – collective bargaining, retirement security, health care, education, and the delivery of public services in our state and our towns. But we will not be portrayed as “faceless bureaucrats.” We will endeavor to define ourselves and the work we do for the communities we serve. And we will fight – together – for the interests of working families.

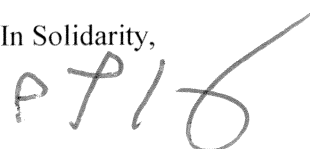
This will be a difficult year. As expected, Governor Christie used his State of the State address last week to renew his calls for pension and benefit “reform.” I think we all recognize that the security of our pension system is threatened, but we also recognize that the fix cannot be simply to dismantle the system. On this issue, too, Reich was correct in his diagnosis: “The solution is no less to slash public pensions than it is to slash private ones. It's for all employers to fully fund their pension plans.” Our members have made their contributions; the state has not. Our members are not the ones who have made reckless investment decisions or irresponsible actuarial assumptions. The discussion about the long term health and security of our pension system will not be easy, but our voice will be heard.

This fight will surely take place in the context of both negotiations for a new contract covering state employees and debate on the FY 2012 State budget. We know that these will likely be the most difficult negotiations we have ever had. But we will be prepared to fight to protect our jobs, our standard of living, and the services we provide to New Jersey. Unfortunately, Governor Christie's State of the State address showed that those very services remain in jeopardy as he moves ahead with his agenda to dismantle the public sector. His speech outlined more of the same for New Jersey – devastating cuts in public services; further cuts in municipal aid that, along with last year's 2% property tax cap, will create tremendous stresses on municipalities; and more tax breaks for the wealthiest New Jerseyans. Make no mistake, this is not a working families agenda and together it is our responsibility to show that Governor Christie cannot put the entire burden on working families and taxpayers. That is not the message we took to Washington in October, and it is not the message we delivered in November with the election of Linda Greenstein.

In addition to information on upcoming special events, enclosed you will find a **Member Contact Sheet**. As part of our ongoing efforts to improve communications with our members, I am asking you to take a moment and complete the form and return it to the Local. Communication will be very important this year and it is imperative that we be able to reach members with updates and when member action is required.

Thank you for your continued support. I look forward to working with each of you to build our Union!

In Solidarity,



Patrick Kavanagh
President

P.S. Please make sure to visit our website for updates, and to read the article by Robert Reich, “The Shameful Attack on Public Employees” – www.cwalocal1032.org