

DPH 1199 Chapter Newsletter

January 2009

Contract Negotiations

The DPH representatives at the contract negotiations are Dermot Jones, Veronica Robinson and Tina Downes. There are a total of seventeen 1199 members serving on this committee which are rotated from the original 80 because of a lack of funds for release time and part of the ground rules set forth during the beginning of negotiations. Thank you for all the time and effort you have put in on our behalf.

The first part of the negotiations dealt with non-economic matters and incorporating MOA's into corresponding articles in an easier to read format.

The economic discussions started in December. Among the proposals put forward are negotiating a two (2) year contract, which would not lock us into a contract which, given the current economic climate, might not be favorable. Also proposed are adding a 12th and 13th step, an increase in educational and training funds, and the continuation of annual increments. In addition, there has been discussion of a voluntary 40 hour work week, a master evaluation committee, and a statewide travel policy.

Meetings with Legislators

1199 has been working to set up meetings with legislators at various facilities and agencies to familiarize legislators with the work that is being done at the sites. They need to be educated when it comes to making decisions about what and where to cut. Meetings have been held at Southbury Training School, Dept. of Corrections, and DMHAS facilities. A meeting at DPH is being scheduled.

In addition, a lobby day was organized at the Capitol on November 24, the day of the Special Session. January 7, 2009 was the first day of the legislative session and lobby days are being organized weekly. It is important for members to emphasize that during economic hard times it is not the time to cut services. DPH members showed high visibility in November, and we need to continue to get our message to the legislature that we are in economic crisis and need long term solutions.

Meet Our New Organizer



Greetings!-I am Jessica Espinoza and I have recently transitioned as Union Organizer for Department of Public Health SEIU District 1199 Union members. Although I am new to the State of Connecticut, I am quickly absorbing the ins and outs of state health care services, and specifically the unique challenges faced by members at DPH. As many of you are aware, we are currently in contract negotiations as well as facing a state and national economic crisis. In addition, there are issues that arise in the workplace daily. These problems are newly occurring as well as from the past.

I am your organizer, but I am not the union. The power of the union comes from members who work in unity to tackle their common problems. The power of the union comes from YOU. You are the union and I am here to help you organize yourselves to the point where members are all aware of their rights and how to stand up to protect these rights.

Many concerns have been voiced and it appears that there is a long road ahead of us. "Solidarity is not a matter of sentiment but a fact, cold and impassive as the granite foundations of a skyscraper. If the basic elements, identity of interest, clarity of vision, honesty of intent, and oneness of purpose, or any of these is lacking, all sentimental pleas for solidarity, and all other efforts to achieve it will be barren of results." (Eugene V. Debs, American Union Leader)

Beginning in January, I will be having office hours at DPH once a month so that I can be available to answer questions and listen to your concerns. Please make arrangements with a delegate.

Get to know Your Delegate

Doug Yeager
Marijane Mitchell
Danielle Orcutt
Joan Simpson
Susan Yurasevecz
Frank Marino
Paula Gubkin
Veronica Robinson (lab)
Thomas Lumpkin (lab)

2009 Chapter Meetings

Chapter meetings are scheduled quarterly. They are held in Conference Room A/B from noon – 1 pm. Bring your lunch and stay as long as you can. These meetings are intended to provide a forum for members to ask questions and express concerns. They are also an opportunity for members to receive updates and information from the delegates. As a union member, it is important to stay involved and informed.

Mark your calendar:

2009 1199 Chapter Meetings

January 21
April 15
July 15
October 21

If you would like to place an item on the agenda of a chapter meeting, please contact: Joan Simpson at 509-7818 or joan.simpson@ct.gov

REMINDER: Union related information is posted on the union bulletin board located on each floor. Be sure to check it out periodically for important, breaking information.



GRANT REDUCTIONS/ ELIMINATIONS

As most 1199ers at the Department of Public Health know, federal grants fund many of our positions as Connecticut relies heavily on the federal government to fund our public health activities. The economy is in a recession and the lack of money at the federal level trickles down to the states. Connecticut DPH has seen the reduction and sometimes elimination of grant monies in the last few years.

What happens to the employee in the position that now has no money to support it?

DPH felt that the layoff language in our contract did not apply to the employees in this situation because there were positions available in the agency that the affected employee could be transferred to.

1199 felt that the layoff language did apply and Article 16 rights should be invoked so an institutional grievance was filed.

What was the outcome of the grievance?

The State Office of Labor Relations, DPH, and 1199 came to an agreement that gives employees rights when they are in a position where the federal funding gets reduced/eliminated so the position cannot be economically supported.

The affected employees will get notice, will get options, and a process will occur. Notify a delegate if this is happening to you.

Election Reflections

I hope everyone here in Public Health is still high on the magnificent election outcome! I wanted to report on my campaign experiences with 1199/SEIU. First, members should feel really good about the election mobilization our union accomplished! SEIU in CT took responsibility for a lot of the work in New Hampshire, an important swing state. Our New England local (1199) sponsored 4 bus trips up to N.H., including a 2 day overnight trip the weekend before the election. Over 225 of us loaded into 4 buses and worked the 2 days in Manchester. The results? Over 19,000 doors knocked, identifying over 9000 Obama supporters. Other members worked in other communities around the state. And we were successful!

Personally, it was hard work but a real blast doing it. Our main work included knocking on doors, identifying voters and convincing the undecided. It is amazing how many nice people there are, even after months, rather years (2), of election campaigning in New Hampshire. Also, I was reminded of how many great fellow members in other agencies we have in our union. Often, here at DPH we are concerned about making sure the union keeps us in mind as public health workers (not caregivers), but is important to know our members in other agencies (and nursing homes) do incredible work! I met Delphine who works in a state-run group home whose work keeps people with mental problems from being homeless or in prison. My canvassing partner Cathy works at a mental health center in New Haven, and often works with the homeless. These folks work hard, but were willing to give up a weekend to bring about change. Some of the people on my bus took 3 or 4 trips up to New Hampshire – a real commitment! On Election Day, I met even more of our members canvassing and working the polls in Bridgeport. SEIU and 1199 were everywhere!

Our union and members participated in a great historical change, and everyone should be proud. For me, a descendent of slave owners from North Carolina, it was a great honor to be part of this historic campaign. However, it is even more important for members to stay involved, including here on a state level – especially with contract negotiations underway and the state budget problems! Part of that involvement can be participation in the SEIU PAC fund – see your delegates for more information.

Kenny Foscue