

No increase in state health care premium costs as Comptroller looks to help cities, towns

Comptroller Kevin Lembo today announced that state health care premiums will remain the same for Fiscal Year 2013 for all medical, pharmacy and dental plans serving state employees and retirees. “While the rest of the United States is experiencing health care cost increases of more than 8 percent - twice the general rate of inflation – the state has managed to stabilize its rates with no increase,” Lembo said. “This is a strong signal that state health care initiatives to improve preventive care - and ensure more quality care - are paying off.”

Lembo said health care initiatives that have likely contributed to these controlled health care costs include:

*An increase in utilization of primary care physicians following the implementation of the Patient-Centered Medical Home (PCMH) initiative last year and the Health Enhancement Program, both designed to ensure that state employees and retirees receive better oversight by their primary care physicians and regular preventive care and screenings.

*Lower emergency room visits as a result of this better primary care coordination and through the Health Enhancement Program’s co-pay structure that seeks to stop unnecessary emergency room admissions.

*Pharmacy initiatives that have reduced prescription drug costs and enabled the state to receive increased federal support.

“This news also reinforces the benefits for municipalities and boards of education joining the state plan - through the CT Partnership Plan that my office launched,” Lembo said. “The state’s rate stability is one of several potential benefits and savings that towns can achieve by joining the CT Partnership Plan. “I will continue to work with towns, cities - and the administration - to identify and implement additional cost controls in state government, while also improving the quality of state services.”



9th Annual

CONNECTICUT VETERANS' MEMORIAL DAY PICNIC

WHEN: Saturday, May 26, 2012

TIME: 11:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

AT

**Rocky Hill Veterans Home & Hospital
287 West Street
Rocky Hill, CT 06067**

Sponsored by Council 4 AFSCME. For volunteer information please contact:

**Steve Curran, AFSCME Local 1565, Chair
CT Veterans Committee
203-509-6342**

Rain or Shine

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the 4 WORD

The Voice of Council 4 AFSCME Connecticut

May 2012

What's Inside

“The Public Only Hears the Worst. They Need to Hear the Best.”

Correctional Officers Stop Inmate Suicides

To say that working in Connecticut’s prison system is dangerous, grueling and often misunderstood by the general public would be an understatement.

“A good day for us is a quiet day, with everyone going home safe,” reflected AFSCME Local 387 member Rob Crowell, a 14-year Correctional Officer at Cheshire Correctional Institution.

Describing a recent day of tumult at the prison, Crowell added, “It wasn’t a good day, but it ended positively.”

The day in question saw Crowell and fellow Officer and Local 387 member Dave Granata intervene to stop an inmate from hanging himself.

The sequence of events – calling an emergency code, forcing their way into the cell (the inmate used his body to obstruct the entrance), detaching the inmate from his homemade noose, administering life-saving CPR and helping get the inmate onto a stretcher and into the ambulance – took all of 15 minutes, if that.

“We’re trained for these kinds of occurrences,” Granata said. “We knew what we were doing. We were determined to get the inmate back to breathing.”

Crowell added, “Instinct kicks in. You know you have to do something quickly. You don’t have time to think.”

Crowell’s and Granata’s recent life-saving intervention occurred during a rash of suicide attempts. Local 387 members worked with correctional staff to save every life, but one inmate did manage to kill himself.



AFSCME Local 387’s Dave Granata, left, and Rob Crowell.

That suicide inevitably made it to the press.

The corollary, course, is that saving a life never makes to print or television.

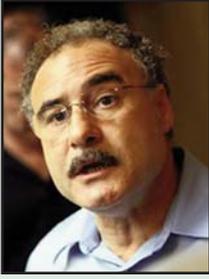
“There’s a lot of professionalism in our department that the public doesn’t see. The public only hears the worst. They need to hear the best,” Granata observed.

Local 387 Executive Board member Rudy Demiraj said Crowell’s and Granata’s life-saving efforts underscores the importance of preparation through professional training:

“Their story is a prime example of why our union is advocating for more training for correctional officers. The training our members received kicked in and led to a life being saved. I’m proud to serve with these officers and I’m proud of their actions.”

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Dead Peasants Vs. Live Workers



Imagine being worth more dead than alive to your employer. That's the idea behind dead peasant insurance – a ghoulish but all too legal scheme in which companies secretly insure the lives of their employees and make themselves the beneficiaries.

The practice supposedly started with the Winn Dixie, whose brokerage firm described the deceased workers as “Dead Peasants.” Corporations including Wal-Mart, Dow Chemical, Procter & Gamble and Walt Disney have exploited this practice, cashing in on the tax-free death benefits when their employees die.

We have come to expect this kind of amoral behavior from Corporate America. We don't expect it from state government.

Yet the General Assembly's Commerce Committee just considered a bill that would pull money out of the state employee pension fund, so prudently managed by Treasurer Denise Nappier, to purchase insurance on the lives of state employees.

Thankfully, the Connection style-dead peasant bill died in committee. Our union lobbied hard against it as we beat back a big financial corporation that stood to gain from this risky, morbid venture.

Instead, we're advocating forward-thinking legislation premised not on the demise of certain groups of workers, but rather on the health and well-being of all Connecticut workers.

Both the Labor Committee and the Aging Committee favorably voted on bills that would create a task force to study the creation of a retirement plan for private sector workers

offered through the State. Sadly most small business employees (and many owners) have no retirement security beyond Social Security, which was designed to augment, not replace, pensions.

This legislation is a direct result of our effort to strengthen and expand retirement security in these perilous times. Ironically, the committee votes came on the heels of a new report forecasting “Retirement Hell.” According to LIMRA, a trade and marketing group based in Windsor, while baby boomers and Gen X-ers are expected to live longer, but they don't have the financial security their parents had to sufficiently provide for their golden years.

“Too many Americans are headed for retirement hell,” LIMRA CEO and President Robert A. Kerzner told The Courant.

That's why we advocate expanding, not cutting, health and pension security. It's a measure of our success that the financial services industry, the business lobby and reactionary newspapers like the Waterbury Republican-American have come out swinging against the idea of a task force charged with recommending ways to improve retirement security – just as they come out swinging against any initiative to rebuild the middle class.

Call it a major philosophical and moral difference. They believe in dead peasants. We believe in living employees.

In solidarity,

Sal Luciano

Executive Director

New Contract Pleases North Haven School Employees

North Haven school support staff, AFSCME Local 1303-249, ratified a new three-year collective bargaining agreement that enhances health and dental coverage and includes general wage increases. The local represents approximately 70 North Haven public school paraprofessionals and secretaries.

“From where we started and where we ended up, this is a fair agreement our members, especially in this economy,” said Local 1303-249 President Daria Gambardella, a guidance secretary at North Haven High School. “We've been paying more [for family coverage] than anybody in the system. Many of us are supporting our families.”

“We love what we do and want to be treated fairly. And that's what we accomplished with this contract.”



L-R: Local 1303-249 members Randi Scott (Secretary), Daria Gambardella (President) and Gail Arciuolo (Treasurer).

Norwich City Workers Join Council 4

Seeking a stronger voice at work as they head into contract negotiations this spring, Norwich City Hall employees voted to affiliate with Council 4. The workers cast 44 votes for our union, 10 for the Connecticut Independent Labor Union (their previous representative) and two for UPSEU. The new bargaining unit represents more than 60 city workers.

“What does it mean to be a part of Council 4? It means we’ll have much-needed technical support from a competent staff for our contract negotiations and all of our issues in the coming years,” said Angelo Callis, a family therapist and president of newly chartered AFSCME Local 2422.

“Council 4 will give us the organizational support we need to move forward,” Callis added.

According to Local 2422 Vice President Debbie Delaporta, a clerk in the assessor’s office, “We want better representation in negotiations and respect from the employer. That’s why we voted for Council 4.”



Congratulations and welcome to AFSCME Local 2422, representing City of Norwich workers.

Records clerk Christine Averna called the voting results “empowering.” She also plans to take advantage of the AFSCME Union Privilege benefits program.

“AFSCME just offered us more of what we needed,” Averna said.

Torrington Local 1579’s Lisa Gay Remembers the Troops

What do you get when you mix 100 pounds of cookie dough and a dedicated city employee? In Torrington, the answer is more than 1,000 home-baked cookies delivered to our soldiers still serving their country in Afghanistan and Iraq, thanks to Lisa Gay, a senior secretary in the assessor’s office and a member of AFSCME Local 1579.

Last year, when Gay, discovered there was a surplus of cookie dough left over from school fund-raisers, she kicked into gear with an ambitious idea. “One of my best friends has a son serving in Afghanistan,” Gay said, “so I thought it would be great if we used the surplus dough to bake cookies for the troops. They’re the real heroes.”

Gay and a few of her friends met last summer and baked enough cookies to stock a Stop & Shop. She then solicited fellow city employees to provide the names and addresses of family members serving in the Middle East.



Local 1579’s Lisa Gay, right, was honored for her efforts to help troops serving in the Middle East.

With her is Local 1579 member Phil Dubourg, whose son is in the Air Force. Gay and Dubourg are seen at the Torrington’s War Memorial inside City Hall.

The cookies were sent out in mid-July so they would arrive ahead of the Christmas holiday. The home baked goods were greatly appreciated, according to Local 1579 member Phil Dubourg, a city custodian whose son Caleb serves in the Air Force. “The troops were appreciative,” Dubourg said. “They polished the cookies off in a couple of hours. It meant a lot to them.”

At a special City Council meeting in January, Torrington Mayor Ryan Bingham invited Specialist Jakob Parsons of the CT Army National Guard to speak.

Specialist Parsons, who just finished a stint with the 77th Theater Brigade Headquarters, presented Gay with a CT flag that flew over Iraq in appreciation for her kindness to the troops.

Gay felt humbled by the recognition. “To me, it was just a few cookies. We had a great day baking. The real story is our soldiers who are out there fighting for us.”

Norwalk Members, Community Fight Privatization



Norwalk Common Council leader Carvin Hilliard.

Members of AFSCME Local 2405, representing Norwalk public service workers, are mobilizing to stop the Department of Public Works from getting approval to privatize city sanitation operations.

On March 13, local elected officials, union members and residents joined Local 2405 members as they rallied in front of City Hall before the Common Council meeting, with signs reading “It’s Unwise to Privatize” and “Privatization Equals Corruption.”

“That’s why we’re demonstrating here today: corruption,” said Local 2405 Vice President Hector DeJesus. “It’s all around the state. You look at the paper, you see that privateers line the pockets of government officials. There’s no hiding from that; it’s the truth.”

“Privatization only benefits the company,” said Norwalk Common Council minority leader Carvin Hilliard told rally participants. “It does not benefit me and you, the consumer. It does not benefit you; it’s not good. It’s capitalism at its worst. Privatization does not work.”

As this newsletter went to press, the Common Council delayed voting on privatizing sanitation, due in no small measure to strong public arguments made by Local 2405 members.

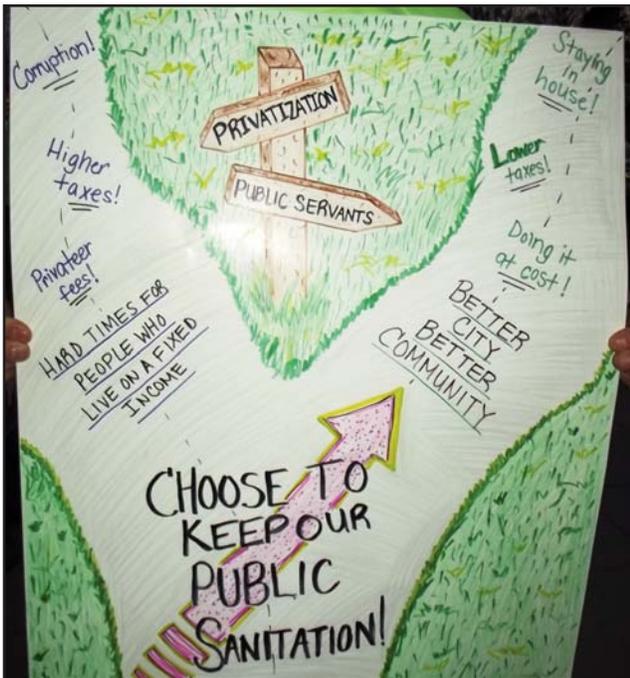
If [trash collection] goes private, it goes out of the control of the citizens,” said Local 2405 President Milton Giddiens. “It puts it in the privateer’s hands, and you do not see that private contract. This is very dangerous because you do not know what’s going on.”



Local 2405 members and supporters on the march.



AFSCME Local 1042, representing Norwalk Board of Education custodial and maintenance workers, was among the many unions that came out to support Local 2405. Local President Curtis Newman and E-Board member Stanley Shuler are seen here.



This poster, courtesy of Gabrielle DeJesus, the daughter of Local 2405 member Hector DeJesus, says it all.



Local 2405 President addresses the crowd. Also pictured, from left, are union member Jimmy Fortini, Peter Thor of Council 4 and Matt Miklave, who sits on the Norwalk Common Council.

Meet the Next Wave of Young Union Workers

Council 4's Next Wave Committee is currently recruiting young activists to join the effort to strengthen our union. The committee is part of an effort across our International Union focused on recruiting, training and mentoring AFSCME members age 35 and under.

"The Next Wave Committee is planning educational and mobilization programs for the whole union," said state clerical worker and AFSCME Local 704 member Patrick Kilby. "We hope to be a place where younger members feel they can have a voice in their union."

Next Wavers to focus on increasing the involvement of younger union members, teaching the union's history and purpose, ensuring the growth of future leaders and improving union visibility.

"It's great to have a group of younger committed activists lead us in the fight to rebuild the American Dream," said Council 4 Executive Director Sal Luciano.



L-R: Next Wavers Marsha Tulloch, Linda Felix and Devon O'Nalty (kneeling) of Local 269; Matthew Brokman, Council 4, and Patrick Kilby, Local 704.

To learn more or join up with the Next Wave, contact Matthew Brokman, mbrokman@council4.org or (860) 612-3822. And be sure to check our Next Wave Facebook page at www.facebook.com/council4nextwave.

New Haven County Marshals Give Back To Communities In Need

State legislators from Meriden, Milford, New Haven and West Haven teamed with the New Haven County Marshals Association, AFSCME Local 2193, to present charitable contributions totaling \$7,500 to nine local non-profit organizations at the Marshal's Annual Recognition Dinner in Milford.

Benefiting organizations were the Battered Women's Shelter & Crisis Center of Meriden; Boys & Girls Club of Milford; Boys & Girls Village, Inc. of Milford; Maloney High School; Band Booster Club; Milford Senior Center

Fuel Bank; Ronald McDonald House of New Haven; West Haven Community House; West Haven Emergency Assistance Taskforce; and the Woodruff Family YMCA.

The Marshals Association has donated more than \$200,000 in charitable funds in the last 12 years.

"We appreciate the generosity of the New Haven County Marshals Association," said Milford Boys & Girls Club Executive Director Megan Altomare. "Support like this goes a long way toward keeping the Club a safe place for our kids to learn, grow and have fun."



L-R: State Rep. Kim Rose of Milford; New Haven County Marshals President Robert Hardiman; Julie Meyers, Milford Boys & Girls Club Executive Director Megan Altomare and Marshals Association Executive Board Member George Amato, Jr.

Council 4 Responds to D-SNAP Fraud Investigation

In March, Gov. Malloy announced that 27 state workers had been terminated, five resigned and 10 retired rather than risk their pensions as a result of the continuing investigation into applications for Disaster Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (D-SNAP).

"We do not condone fraud by public employees or anyone else. Those who knowingly defrauded the D-SNAP program should be accountable as a matter of public trust," said Council 4 Executive Director Sal Luciano in a statement.

"In our country, a person is innocent until proven guilty," Luciano continued. "State employees who have been investigated and punished are entitled to due process rights guaranteed by collective bargaining. For those members who believe they have been wrongly accused, we are pursuing the grievance process to assure that the rights of individuals are respected."

Legislative Update: Pensions, Health Care, Minimum Wage

State employee pensions are on the way to more stable funding thanks to the Governor's push for increased payments into an underfunded system. When the Appropriations Committee announced their revisions to the Governor's proposed budget in late March, their plan codified additional payments to the state employee pension fund that were passed by resolution early in the session at our urging.

Our effort to expand retirement security took another step forward as both the Labor Committee and the Aging Committee reported out bills that would create a task force to study how the state can administer a universal defined-benefit plan that guarantees adequate retirement income.

In other legislative developments:

The Insurance Committee held a hearing on a bill to expand the healthcare pooling program that was just launched for municipalities to include small businesses. Council 4 is in favor of this legislation, as it will strengthen the pooling plan that the Comptroller Kevin Lembo is rolling out.

Lembo announced that his office's initial analysis of more than 50 municipalities and boards of education reveals significant savings of five to eight percent by switching to the state plan, usually with better benefits. This could help save



Council 4 members recently met with House Majority Leader Brendan Sharkey of Hamden to discuss state and municipal legislation affecting our members. L-R: Godfrey Ferguson (Local 2663), Laura Pettie (Local 478), State Rep. Brendan Sharkey, Holly Masi (Local 2863), and Lisa McArthur (Local 2663).

jobs and preserve benefits for our municipal workers – and pave the way to help small businesses, too.

A bill that would extend coverage under the Family and Medical & Leave Act to school paraprofessionals and teachers' aides has passed the Labor Committee and awaits action.

As noted by Executive Director Luciano in his column, an ill-advised effort to pull money out of the state employee pension fund to purchase insurance on the lives of state employees failed in the Commerce Committee.

There is a bill to raise Connecticut's minimum wage to \$9.25 an hour. We support this legislation because it's important not only to raise the wage floor, but to give the state's lowest paid workers a raise. Click on www.ctneedsaraise.org to add your support.

In Memoriam: Joel Schweidel, Jeff Moore

Council 4 mourns the passing of two former staff representatives who served our union, Jeff Moore and Joel Schweidel. Joel worked at Council 4 from 1990-98 and represented state bargaining units. He passed on Feb. 15. Jeff worked at Council from 1991-2005 and represented municipal bargaining units. He passed on Feb. 19.

For Joel Schweidel, memorial donations may be made to the ALS Association CT Chapter, 4 Oxford Rd. Unit D4, Milford, CT 0646. For Jeff Moore, please send memorial donations to the Burlington Public Library, 34 Library Lane, Burlington, CT 06013.

We extend our deepest sympathies to the family and friends of Joel Schweidel and Jeff Moore, both of whom served our members with great distinction and believed in the power of our union to make a positive difference.



COUNCIL 4 LOBBY DAY

Wednesday, May 2, 2012

10:00 A.M. – 2:00 P.M.

State Capitol, Hartford, CT

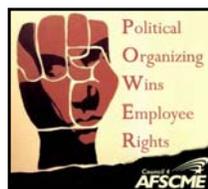
Tell Your State Legislator to Fight for the Middle Class:

- **Expand retirement security for all workers**
- **Raise the minimum wage**
- **Stop the attacks on public employees' pay, healthcare and pension**

Lunch will be provided.

Stay tuned to www.council4.org for the latest updates.

Questions? Contact Matthew Brokman at:
(860) 989-9123 or mbrokman@council4.org



Burlington Town Workers Stand Up and Fight Back

While Burlington Town Hall employees learned the hard way that public employees have a huge target on their backs, they also learned there is power in their union.

“It’s been a struggle since we organized, but we stood up and fought for our rights,” Assistant Town Clerk and Local 1303-447 President Christa Ronalter recently reflected.

Indeed they did.

More than two years ago, Burlington Town Hall employees were unrepresented and lacking power to protect their services. So they voted to unionize and became members of Local 1303-447 of Council 4.

Former First Selectman Catherine Bergstrom, an anti-union Republican, immediately targeted our members for retaliation, ordering the layoffs of Ronalter and Local Vice President Mary-Jane Ugalde, also an Assistant Town Clerk. Bergstrom also targeted another union member, Tom Arcari, stripping him of his regular Animal Control Officer responsibilities and reducing his custodial hours to 15 hours a week from 30.

With the help of Council 4 Staff Representative Tim Oppenheimer and Field Representative Dave Testa, Local 1303-447 members mobilized to stop Bergstrom’s tyranny.

Council 4 filed labor complaints against the town, charging that the layoffs were retaliation for union activity and in violation of contractual procedures. As a result, Ronalter and Ugalde eventually got their jobs back, while Arcari had his hours restored.

“The residents are glad we’re back. They weren’t getting the services they had been getting prior to our



L-R: Mary Jane Ugalde, Tom Arcari and Christa Ronalter.

being forced out,” Arcari said.

Burlington union members went public, speaking at Town Meetings and talking with local reporters. And, they engaged on the political front, supporting Bergstrom’s challenger, Theodore Shafer, in last year’s town election.

“Our members saw the importance of engaging in politics. They needed to elect someone who would work with them and not try to destroy them,” Testa said.

Shafer won the race and has changed the tone in Burlington for the better.

“Our unity as union members helped change the working atmosphere. We’re family and we look out for each other. There’s a real sense of community now,” Ronalter observed. “Council 4 has been with us every step of the way.”

Waterford Local 1303-37 Prevails in Contracting Out Case

The Town of Waterford has agreed not to contract out ground maintenance works that belongs to the bargaining unit representing Department of Public Works employees under the terms of a settlement overseen the Connecticut State Board of Labor Relations. Council 4 Staff Representative Leonard LaLuna filed an unfair labor practice complaint on the local union’s behalf last fall. At issue was the Town’s use of contracted workers to perform grass cutting on board of education properties when there were vacant positions within the bargaining unit.



Local 1303-37 President Glenn Andrews.

“Our department is understaffed and positions have not been filled as called for, which is why the town opted to bring in an outside contractor,” explained AFSCME Local 1303-37 President Glenn Andrews. “We don’t have an issue with contractors working in town as long as bargaining unit positions are filled.”

“We’re pleased with the agreement and there’s no animosity with our employer,” Andrews said. “We have to look out for the best interests of our members and the town.”

**Get Union Smart! Text message “CT” to AFSCME (237263)
for the latest updates and alerts *standard rates apply**