



HPAE LOCAL 5103

BAGDOWN

A NEWSLETTER FOR THE MEMBERS OF
HPAE LOCAL 5103 ARC, AFT/AFL-CIO

FEBRUARY 2016

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENTS

Hello Brothers and Sisters:

I hope everyone had a very nice holiday season, and Happy New Year to everyone.

As the year starts off, we have some new committees that we hope will bring this local together to fight this fight. Currently, we have the Health and Safety committee headed by **Jason Gunsenhouser**, the Sunshine Committee headed by **Cora Shorter**, COPE committee headed by **Sheri Baxter**, and a new committee - the Woman's Right committee - headed by myself.

We need your help and your input to get these committees up and running. If you have an interest that can help us further build our union, please let us know. We have a wide spread of staff from different background and cultures; please bring your ideas to the table. If you are interested in any of the above committees, please let the committee head know, and if you would like to start your own committee, let Judy or myself know and we will help you get started.

Thank you. Be safe out there.

In Solidarity
Renee Conyers
Co-President, HPAE Local 5103

Hello Everyone!

A very belated Happy Holidays to all! Hope everyone's holidays were wonderful.

By now, I'm sure you all know that the National Addendum – the national agreement with Red Cross - is being implemented. Unfortunately, in some cases the implementation is happening very slowly. We are still working out some of the issues with Red Cross, and in some cases it's VERY frustrating. There's a very old song by The Who, with a line that says "Meet the new boss, same as the old boss"...At this point that pretty much sums it up. We are fighting for what we know we won during the national negotiations. Red Cross, of course, is dragging its feet in the hopes that we'll just give up and let them have their way. NOT GONNA WORK! The coalition remains intact and communicating and working together.

If you have questions about the Addendum, the Contract, or anything "new" or unusual that may be happening, please ask! Text, email or Facebook are all ways to get in touch with all of us.

Don't forget, too, that the entire contract, addendum and work rules are on hpae.org under Local 5103

Be safe out there

Judy Merkowsky
Co-President, HPAE Local 5103

Secretary Treasurers Message:

Hi everyone. I just want to say happy February to you all.

We all know February is known for Black History Month, for Valentine's Day and for Leap Day, which happens every four years.

National Freedom Day is my favorite. It's celebrated on February 1. National Freedom Day celebrates the freedom of slaves, and recognizes that America is a symbol of freedom.

This day was established in 1948 to remind us what America stands for, and that it is a symbol of freedom for all people. The roots of this special day come directly from the end of slavery and the signing of the 13th amendment to the U.S. constitution, which outlawed slavery.

Celebrate this day by reflecting upon your own freedoms that you enjoy by being in America. Millions in this world are not free. We as Americans are blessed in more ways than we realize.

SaBrina C. Handy
VP Secretary-Treasurer

General Membership Meeting Alert

Brothers and Sisters of Local 5103:

There will be a General Membership Meeting for our local on March 6th from 4:00pm – 6:00pm. Location is TBD, so listen out for a robo-call or ask your union reps. Please make sure to include this date/time in your calendars. We need to discuss the implementation of the National Addendum and the next steps for continuing to build power in our local. We'll see you then!

Greetings from Health and Safety

From the corner of safety: It's been a long time coming that allows the members of Local 5103 to determine if a site is suitable to effectively run a blood drive. For the longest time, we had no say. We all now have the role and responsibility to work under the proper conditions. Stay together, be safe together.

From the corner of health: Please note - TeamCare is the administrator of our benefits; they are supposed to have all the answers to questions about our health plan and other benefits. Blue Cross/Blue Shield and Humana are the provider networks. You can have a detailed explanation of benefits emailed to you from TeamCare upon request.

Lastly, report any injury on the way to, throughout, and leaving work. You are covered during the whole time.

Jason Gunsenouser
VP Health and Safety



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MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT



Protecting Those Who Protect Us

With two of his many recent legislative vetoes, Governor Christie has sent a clear message to our child welfare workers, public safety workers and emergency responders: we expect you to risk your health and even your life to protect our children, our families and our communities but, should workplace hazards injure or sicken you, you are on your own.

Day in and day out, firefighters, police, emergency responders, nurses and social workers face threats to their health – from physical assaults to exposure to infectious diseases and toxic chemicals. Yet, with his veto pen, Governor Christie once again refused to protect the people who have dedicated their lives to protecting us during dangerous and even catastrophic events.

The first bill vetoed by the Governor, the ‘Thomas P Canzanella 21st Century First Responders Protection Act’, would have eased the burden of proof needed for first responders to receive workers’ compensation if they developed life-threatening illnesses after toxic or other hazardous exposures.

During a public health crisis, it is first responders, including police, firefighters, EMTs and nurses who we rely upon to protect us. As both paid and volunteer First Responders, these men and women respond to catastrophic incidents, often without knowing the identity of the specific toxins, carcinogens or infectious agents they are facing.

In their efforts to receive financial protection from our workers’ compensation system, First Responders often have to fight long and costly legal battles to prove the link between their exposure and subsequent illnesses, some of which can present years or even decades later. The Canzanella bill would have

eased the burden of proof for death or disability resulting from exposure to toxins or other specified hazards experienced by a public safety worker engaged in response to a terrorist attack, epidemic, or other catastrophic emergency.

New Jersey, one of the most densely populated states, has more than 3000 facilities that store or use hazardous substances. As a state with a highly concentrated chemical industry, NJ should be setting the standard for protecting public safety workers who rush to a catastrophe to save lives. Instead, Governor Christie vetoed this bill for the second time, even after sponsors amended the bill.

Governor Christie also vetoed ‘Leah’s Law’, which would have provided security personnel for social workers in offices providing care to children at risk. These offices have been the site of physical assaults and threats to caseworkers on numerous occasions, and last year, a social worker nearly lost her life after she was brutally attacked. The attack took place shortly after Governor Christie’s budget cuts led to the removal of security personnel from the premises. In the year since that attack, there have been more than a dozen threats made to Department of Children and Families (DCF) workers, as well as physical attacks on DCF workers in the field.

The nearly-fatal attack on Leah Coleman, a social worker stabbed 21 times in a Department of Children and Families office, brought the dangers of social work into sharp relief. In addition to social workers, HPAAE nurses provide care to children at risk in these offices. In fact, it was the nurses who saved Leah’s life. Leah’s Law would have provided security personnel, metal detectors and panic buttons in Department of Children and Families offices, and escorts for staff going into homes where they have previously faced threats or where family members have a history of violence.

Those of us in social services or emergency response know too well

that our occupations are at the highest risk for many injuries and illnesses – some life threatening. According to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration more assaults (48 percent) occur in the health care and social services industry than any other. And a 2010 U.S. Bureau of Labor and Statistics report stated that healthcare workers experienced an injury/illness incidence rate of 5.2 out of every 100 full-time workers, a number well ahead of construction and manufacturing. On average, 31 firefighters were killed on the job each year from 2009 to 2013 (BLS) and 14,700 suffered work-related nonfatal injuries and illnesses that resulted in time away from work.

These were two very different pieces of legislation, but they shared a common goal: protecting the people who every day face situations that most of us would not willingly, whether it be running into burning buildings, responding to toxic catastrophes, or treating and caring for Ebola-infected patients or mentally ill and violent clients.

These are the jobs we have chosen, knowing the hazards, but committed to our work. What we ask for, in turn, are reasonable measures to minimize our risks, and, and for our families to be cared for in the event we are harmed, or even killed as a result of our work. These vetoes show a disregard not only for the workers, but for the children, families, patients and communities taken care of by nurses, firefighters, police, emergency personnel and social workers.

Both of these vetoes disappointed – and even enraged – our state’s first responders, nurses and social workers. While dangers can be a part of the job – we should not simply shrug and accept it, but should expect our elected officials to work with us to minimize the risk – for our lives, our families and the communities we serve. Governor Christie has let us down, again.



110 Kinderkamack Road
Emerson, NJ 07630
Phone: 201-262-5005
www.hpae.org

Address Service Requested

 facebook.com/hpaeaft



Pictured L to R: Judy Merkowsky (Co-President), Jason Gunsenhouser (VP, Health and Safety), Tina Mills (VP, Grievance Chair), Fredrick Deas (Tina's son), Renee Conyers (Co-President) and SaBrina C. Handy (VP, Secretary Treasurer)

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

HPAE Education Days

“Not part of the Job: Stopping Workplace Violence and Bullying in Healthcare”

March 1—Kenilworth, NJ
March 3—Mt. Laurel, NJ

Women in Leadership Development (WILD) Conference

March 4 & 5, 2016—East Brunswick, NJ

Intermediate Officer Training—Essentials of Union Building

April 12, 2016

For more or to register for any of the upcoming events, visit the HPAE website at www.hpae.org