

Highlights of WEC Accomplishments in 2010

Working together with our labor, environmental, and community partners, we made a difference! Below are some examples of WEC accomplishments in 2010 to-date.

Saving Our Sensible Safeguards

WEC has stopped – so far – an enormous attack on the positive role of government protections. Draconian state legislation, introduced by Assemblyman John Burzichelli and Senator Jefferson Van Drew (both Democrats), would obstruct state agencies from issuing safeguards that go beyond federal standards, unless unqualified legislators first approved every detail. WEC built opposition to this legislation by 77 organizations; distributed 10,000 flyers at the Trenton rally against the Governor’s budget; coordinated hundreds of phone calls to legislators; generated media coverage, including *Star Ledger* and *Asbury Park Press* editorials against the bills; and pushed politicians, including Assembly Speaker Oliver and Senate Majority Leader Buono, to oppose deregulation and this legislation.

Protecting Our Environment through Worker/Union Participation

WEC won a landmark, *national* accomplishment. Employees and their union representatives now have rights across the nation to participate and point out risks to workers and communities during Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) inspections to prevent catastrophic chemical releases at the nation’s potentially most dangerous industrial facilities. This worker participation will help EPA reduce toxic releases to our air, water, and land, more accurately assess facility vulnerabilities, including those that could be targeted by terrorists, and prepare for chemical catastrophes. Moreover, the US Chemical Safety and Hazard Investigation Board, which investigates the root causes of chemical accidents affecting workers and communities, responding to WEC’s request, has pledged to better engage workers and families of victims during their investigations.

Leadership for Safe and Healthy Workplaces

WEC continued leadership training through two programs: *Process Safety Management* reached 400 workers (and managers) at facilities that use high hazard chemicals like chlorine and ammonia. This training led to workplace changes, including safer chemical storage, better electrical “lockout-tagout” procedures, enhanced emergency communication systems, and updating of work procedures. *Safe Work, Safe Care* reached 258 workers (and managers) at hospitals and nursing homes. One outcome of WEC’s training is at Camden’s Cooper University Hospital. A Safe Patient Handling Committee set up by the Health Professionals and Allied Employees with management now provides ongoing training. With new equipment and this training, lifting related injuries have decreased.

Healthy Schools for Students and Staff

Working with the New Jersey Education Association and their local affiliates, WEC provides technical and organizational assistance to teachers, support staff and custodians across our state. For example: in Dover, we are helping to stop the District from forcing school employees to remediate asbestos; in Pleasantville, we are helping to assess mold problems in seven schools; and in Clinton, we are helping to investigate a possible cancer cluster. WEC also provides columns for the *NJEA Reporter*, which reaches 200,000 teachers and school staff. Columns in 2010 focused on ergonomics, PCBs in caulk, radon, using occupational health physicians, reducing violence, and safe pest control (and dealing with bedbugs).

WEC’s *Annual Report* for 2010 will be online at www.njwec.org in January 2011.