



News from the NJ Work Environment Council

Sept/Oct 2011

Safe, Secure Jobs
and a Healthy,
Sustainable
Environment

A Jobs Plan for the 99%

New Jersey Work
Environment Council
Annual Membership
Meeting

Wednesday
December 7, 2011
1:00 pm – 3:30 pm

NJEA
180 West State St.
Trenton, NJ

This is our time
to move New Jersey
and America
Forward, Not Back.

Join WEC to discuss
how we can create
jobs and put New
Jersey back on track.



A Jobs Plan for the 99%

While politicians debate whether to put band-aids on our hemorrhaging economy, 99% of us need a large-scale, long-term plan to get America to work and bring our country into the 21st century.

Jobs21! Action Plan

WEC's Board of Directors voted unanimously to support the *Jobs21!* action plan developed by the BlueGreen Alliance (BGA), the national union-environmental coalition of which WEC is the NJ affiliate. Eleven national unions and four national environmental groups are BGA members.

The plan would create millions of jobs and save billions of dollars by...

- **Modernizing our schools** to make them energy efficient, safe, and technologically up-to-date learning and teaching environments.
- **Increasing energy efficiency** in homes and other buildings.
- **Supporting American manufacturing** of sustainable, "green" products and other needs.
- **Investing in transportation and communications systems** for the 21st century.
- **Producing cleaner energy** through seed money and incentives for wind and solar power and other renewables.

"Occupying" Our Jobs and Communities

Supporting *Jobs 21!* is part of WEC's *Forward, Not Back* campaign, along with our fight to protect and strengthen sensible public safeguards for our health and safety at work and in our communities.

The response of millions of Americans to the Occupy Wall Street movement provides a new opportunity to better organize and campaign.

We can:

Campaign for real change, instead of just playing defense or limiting ourselves to supporting small proposals that won't solve big problems. That's why we call our campaign *Forward, Not Back*. People are responding to the Occupy movement because it is talking about the fundamental problems in our country, not just narrow partisan maneuvering among politicians. We have an opportunity to raise our sights about what is possible to fight for and win with a sustained, unified movement.

Insist that Wall Street and big corporations pay us back to undo the damage they did to our economy. They're sitting on the highest profits and cash reserves in history and paying higher CEO salaries and bonuses than ever before. We must insist that they start paying their share to put America to work through proposals like *Jobs 21!*

Work together across organizational and issue lines. Many who are getting involved in the Occupy movement have not been active before. They are looking for a unified, coordinated mass movement. We need to help make that happen.

We are the 99%.

This is our time to move New Jersey and America *Forward, Not Back*.



Act Now

Here are some steps you can take:

- **Join WEC at an Occupy location.** WEC plans to lead a group of our members to Occupy Wall Street and Occupy Philly to join the protestors in solidarity. Stay tuned for upcoming dates.
- **Share information about the Jobs 21! campaign.** WEC has a flyer you can download at www.njwec.org. Or contact us to get copies. And see www.BlueGreenAlliance.org for the detailed *Jobs21!* Plan.
- **Sign a Forward, Not Back pledge card** to show your support. Ask others to sign too.
- **Pass a resolution** from your organization. Get model resolutions and pledge cards from WEC.
- **Invite a speaker** to your next meeting to talk about sensible safeguards and the *Jobs21!* plan.
- **Come to WEC's membership meeting on Wednesday, December 7 from 1:00 to 3:30 pm at NJEA in Trenton** to talk about the opportunities created by the "Occupy" movement.

Forward, Not Back Workshop a Hit!

On October 18, representatives and members of labor and community groups gathered at the Rutgers Labor Education Center to discuss the roots of the economic crisis – Wall Street and corporate greed – and how we can move out of the current crisis to a greener, fairer economy to put New Jersey and America back on track. Les Leopold of the Labor Institute, author of the *Looting of America*, led a discussion on how Wall Street caused the 2008 economic crash and the impact that it has had on the jobs and wages of Americans. Jim Young of the BlueGreen Alliance (BGA) posed the question, “How can we create 8 million jobs?” and asked the group to analyze BGA’s new *Jobs21!* plan. The workshop offered valuable insights to WEC about how we can fight for jobs in New Jersey. The workshop was sponsored by WEC, with the BGA and USW’s Tony Mazzocchi Center for Health, Safety, and Environmental Education. *WEC can offer speakers for your union or environmental organization focusing on this challenge.*

New Safeguards for Health Care Workers and Patients

On September 6, 2011, New Jersey’s Department of Health and Senior Services (DHSS) issued landmark regulations for safe patient handling and violence prevention in hospitals and nursing homes.

Because of a campaign led by the Health Professionals and Allied Employees (HPAE), with backing from other health care unions and WEC, NJ became the fourth state to implement strong safe patient handling laws and the first to implement a violence prevention law for health care workers.

Chronic back pain from unsafe patient lifting is a major reason why health care workers leave their jobs. In NJ, nurses, nurse aides, orderlies and attendants, combined, have the highest number of nonfatal occupational injuries and illnesses involving days away from work of all occupations.

Required worker-management committees are at the heart of both laws. The committees give caregivers a voice to help prevent injuries from workplace violence and from unassisted patient lifts and transfers. Both rules require facilities to establish joint committees

with at least 50 percent of the members being health care workers from different jobs. Management must consult with unions regarding the selection of committee members. Under separate labor laws, unions have a right to *designate* worker representatives in union workplaces to these committees.

The regulations implement two 2008 laws signed by Governor Jon Corzine. DHSS estimates that the rules apply to 465 hospitals and nursing homes.

25th Anniversary of Right to Know Laws

On October 17, WEC helped the EPA mark the 25th anniversary of the federal *Emergency Planning and Community Right-to-Know Act* (EPCRA). At a press conference at the Ironbound Community Corporation (ICC) school in Newark (ICC is a WEC member), WEC Director Rick Engler joined US EPA Administrator Lisa Jackson, EPA Regional Administrator Judith Enck, US Senators Frank Lautenberg and Robert Menendez, and ICC Director Joseph Della Fave to explain the significance of this landmark law.

The act was passed in 1986, after a toxic cloud of pesticide from a Union Carbide plant killed thousands of people in Bhopal, India. Soon after, a release of the same chemical from a West Virginia Union Carbide plant hospitalized 100 people.

As a result of public demand for information, Congress passed EPCRA in the reauthorization of Superfund. EPCRA has played a big role in protecting people’s health and the environment by providing workers, communities, and emergency planners with information on toxic chemical releases into our air, water, and soil.

Under EPCRA, EPA collects this data through the Toxic Release Inventory program (TRI), a public database with information on releases of over 600 toxic chemicals from more than 20,000 facilities nationwide. TRI was the first pub-

licly available database in the world that contained information on pollutant releases. TRI information enables us to make informed decisions on the consequences of toxic releases and to formulate demands for preventing emissions. To use TRI, go www.epa.gov/tri/

EPCRA has also made us safer from toxic emergencies by requiring local emergency planning committees (LEPCs) in counties and municipalities in New Jersey. LEPCs bring together fire and police personnel, medical staff, emergency planners, elected officials, environmentalists, and local citizens to develop response plans for chemical emergencies. Although LEPCs are understaffed and underfunded, they still can play an important role.

News & Notes

Congratulations to...

John Pajak on receiving a service award from the National Council for Occupational Safety and Health for his work with WEC to advance involvement of workers in inspections of industries using highly hazardous chemicals by the NJ Dept. of Environmental Protection and US EPA. WEC Asst. Director Debra McFadden introduced John at an awards ceremony attended by 200 health and safety leaders in Baltimore. **John Shinn** on becoming Director of United Steelworkers (USW) District 4. John began his work in the USW as an employee of AFG industries, a glass plant in Burlington County and has been fighting for workers and their safety and health for over 30 years. Best wishes to outgoing director, **Bill Pienta**, on his retirement and our sincerest gratitude for his support over the years.

Rutgers University and **New Labor**, for receiving a Susan Harwood capacity building grant from OSHA. The four-year grant will enable them to provide Spanish-language hazard prevention training to hard-to-reach workers employed in warehouses and other facilities.

Calendar

Friday, November 18 – WEC’s Annual Awards Celebration 6:30 p.m. Rutgers Labor Education Center New Brunswick, NJ. To purchase tickets, visit www.njwec.org or call Debra Coyle McFadden at (609) 695-7100, ext. 306.

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Back issues of *WEC@WORK* are available at www.njwec.org. Rick Engler & Denise Patel, Editors. WEC is an alliance of 70 labor, environmental and community organizations working together for safe, secure jobs and a healthy, sustainable environment. WEC Staff: Rick Engler, Director; Debra Coyle McFadden, Assistant Director; Cecelia Leto, Project Coordinator; Denise Patel, Campaign Organizer. Staff are members of USW or CWA.

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