



WEC@WORK

News from the NJ Work Environment Council

June 2009

Safe, Secure Jobs
and a Healthy,
Sustainable
Environment

URGENT WEC
ACTION ALERT

Act Today to
Support Strong
Chemical Security
Legislation

We need you to call:

Rep. Frank Pallone
(a senior member of
the House Energy &
Commerce
Committee) who will
vote on this bill
in July
(202) 225-3121

&

Senator Frank
Lautenberg
(subcommittee Chair
on the Senate
Environment & Public
Works Committee)
who will also be
taking up this
legislation soon
(202) 224-3121

Call today and urge
them to oppose
Republican loopholes
and support strong
chemical security
legislation like we
have in New Jersey.

For more information
on the issue, go to
www.njwec.org and
click "Take Action".

WEC Joins Blue Green Alliance

The New Jersey Work Environment Council (WEC), the nation's oldest state labor-environment coalition, has joined the national Blue Green Alliance (BGA) as a New Jersey affiliate. BGA is a national strategic partnership of labor unions and environmental organizations with more than six million members dedicated to increasing the number and quality of jobs in the green economy. Launched by the Sierra Club and the United Steelworkers in 2006, BGA has grown to include the Communications Workers of America, Natural Resources Defense Council, Laborers' International Union of North America, Service Employees International Union, and Utility Workers Union of America. BGA's focus aligns with that of WEC on global warming, clean energy, fair trade, reducing toxic exposures, and worker rights.

"The Work Environment Council has been a leader in bringing union members and environmentalists together," said Larry Cohen, President of the Communications Workers of America, a BGA partner and WEC participant. "Labor unions have a long history of working with environmental groups to improve our communities and our workplaces. The blue-green partnership is growing, both in New Jersey through the work of organizations like WEC, and across the nation to create quality jobs and protect the environment."

"WEC is a leading organization for advocating policies that keep our communities and our workplaces clean, and this coalition understands the fundamental truth that the best way to fix these problems is to bring

BLUEGREEN ALLIANCE

GOOD JOBS, CLEAN ENVIRONMENT, GREEN ECONOMY

together the people who share common concerns about jobs and the environment," said Carl Pope, Sierra Club Executive Director, which is also a BGA partner and WEC member.

"We are thrilled to join BGA and be part of this fast-growing coalition of unions and environmentalists to create good jobs, a clean environment, and a green economy," said WEC President John Pajak, Executive Board member of Teamsters Local 877 in Linden, NJ. "Ensuring workers' rights is deeply connected to protecting our environment — whether it's negotiating a safer workplace or expanding the clean energy economy to create jobs and reduce global warming."

BGA also has affiliates in six other states: Pennsylvania, Indiana, Ohio, Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Kansas. BGA is working to:

- Pass comprehensive clean energy and climate change legislation based on two principles - the best scientific advice on reduction targets and solutions that create and save millions of American jobs;
- Restore the rights of workers in the United States to organize and bargain collectively through support for the

Employee Free Choice Act.

- Establish a 21st Century trade policy that promotes growth and prosperity across global society and embeds enforceable labor, environmental, and human rights standards in our trade agreements; and
- Create a policy on toxic chemicals that protects workers and communities from dangerous substances, enhances public health, and promotes safer alternatives. "As BGA grows, and as partnerships like this develop across the country, our efforts to build a green economy become even stronger," said David Foster, BGA Executive Director. "With WEC, we are expanding our partnership and our reach with the addition of a proven coalition that protects the rights of workers and the environment." For the past twenty years, Foster has been among the labor movement's leading environmental advocates. WEC will honor him for his accomplishments on Friday, November 20 at our annual awards reception. To learn more about the Blue Green Alliance, go to www.bluegreenalliance.org

WEC Convenes Green Jobs Forum

WEC has convened a "Green Jobs Forum" to bring together labor, business, environmental, community, and academic constituencies to work for a transition to a more sustainable economy and to monitor government policies. Meetings on March 20 and June 5 were attended by 45 people overall. On March 20, Labor and Workforce Commissioner David Socolow reported on how our state will use stimulus funds to promote green jobs. On June 5, founder and CEO of PetraSolar Shihab Juran explained the company's SunWave™ solar electric system, which will be mounted on telephone poles. The group also discussed a "consensus statement" defining the Forum's mission, principles, and structure. WEC Consultant Tom O'Neill has done a terrific job organizing this new WEC initiative.

The next forum will be Wednesday, July 15 at 3 PM at PetraSolar in South Plainfield, where our speaker will be John E. Dybvig, Economic Development Director of the Blue Green Alliance. Dybvig will discuss an initiative in Minneapolis-St. Paul to encourage growth of green manufacturing. This experience may help us develop a similar strategy for New Jersey. In the Twin Cities, the Blue Green Alliance convened stakeholders to determine what green products could encourage manufacturing growth. Criteria included potential product strength in the supply chain. The group developed a list of 29 products under the categories of Renewable Energy, Building Products and Transportation and action steps to attract green manufacturing jobs for those products. They are now developing a marketing plan and specific economic development recommendations. For more information about the Green Jobs Forum, contact WEC Director Rick Engler at rickengler@aol.com.

No Response from Governor Corzine on Kuehne's Dangers

In reply to a question about the risks of the Kuehne Chemical facility in South Kearny, New Jersey at the NJ Environmental Federation's conference on April 4, 2009, Governor Corzine said, "I happen to be particularly interested in that plant myself..." but that nothing more could be done to minimize dangers because the plant was now using inherently safer technology (IST) and that

"short of closure" the state has taken necessary steps and that there were also confidentiality issues. Contrary to Gov. Corzine's statement, Kuehne's latest Risk Management Plan (dated March 4, 2009) indicates that a worst-case release of chlorine gas from the plant could still potentially endanger any of 12 million residents within a 14-mile range. Therefore, there is no evidence that management has applied IST. WEC has twice requested that Gov. Corzine convene a summit meeting to discuss the dangers and possible solutions with interested parties, including plant's owners, public officials, workers and local community leaders. WEC has received no response.

Public Health Emergency Declared in Libby, MT

This month, the US EPA declared a public health emergency for the W.R. Grace site in Libby, Montana. The site has been on the EPA's Superfund National Priorities List since 2002. Investigations by the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry found the incidences of asbestosis lung disease in the Libby area were staggeringly higher than the national average. The Department of Health and Human Services is making available a short-term grant to provide needed asbestos-related medical care to Libby and Troy residents.

From 1966 to 1988, more than 200,000 tons of vermiculite ore from W.R. Grace's Libby mine was sent to the company's plant in Hamilton, NJ. Several former workers at the Hamilton location have died or become sick with asbestos-related illness. The State of NJ unsuccessfully filed a lawsuit against W.R. Grace in 2005 to collect fines for providing false information to the NJDEP about the contamination.

News & Notes

- Congratulations! United Steelworkers District Director Bill Pienta has appointed USW Staff Representative and long time member of the WEC Board of Directors John Shinn as Sub-District Director. The USW Sub-District covers New Jersey, Delaware, and parts of New York. WEC also congratulates newly elected officers, of the NJ Education Association: Barbara Keshishian, President; Wendell Steinhauer, Vice President (and WEC Board member); and Marie Blistan, Secretary-Treasurer. They assume their new offices in September. More information about them is available at www.njea.org/pdfs/Reporter_June2009.pdf. And best wishes and thanks to retiring NJEA President Joyce Powell for her tremendous leadership for safe and healthy schools. WEC will honor Joyce on November 20.
- WEC bids farewell to Djenaba Figueroa, WEC's Office Manager for the last four years. Djenaba has been an integral part of the staff, managing many day to day operations to keep WEC running smoothly. She also helped make WEC's Annual Awards Reception a success for the past few years. Thank you for all of your hard work, DJ!
- WEC welcomes Brian Brotman, our volunteer legal intern for the summer. While earning his B.A. in English and Political Theory at Wesleyan University, Brian volunteered as a community organizer for Health Care for All, the Jewish Organizing Initiative, and Alternatives for Community and Environment. He is currently a law student at the Rutgers University School of Law in Camden. Brian will be assisting us with various projects on WEC's chemical security, environmental justice and healthy schools programs.

Calendar

Saturday, August 15 - 34th Annual Clearwater Festival, Asbury Park, 11am - 7pm. For more information, go to www.mcclearwater.org/festival.php.

Saturday, November 14 - *Beyond Toxics: Protecting Our Jobs & Communities*, Rutgers Labor Education Center, New Brunswick, 8 am - 3 pm. Annual WEC membership meeting to follow.

Friday, November 20 - WEC's Annual Awards Reception, Rutgers Labor Education Center, New Brunswick, 7 pm.

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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; Valorie Caffee, Director of Organizing; Djenaba Figueroa, Office Manager; Cecelia Gilligan Leto, Project Coordinator; Denise Patel, Campaign Organizer. Staff are members of USW or CWA.

CWA Local 38010/USW 4-149