

# Talking UNION

CWA public, healthcare & education workers

Fall 2010

## TAKE TEN TO VOTE NOVEMBER 2<sup>ND</sup>

November 2nd is the time for each of us to take TEN to the polls. We have to vote for our jobs, pensions, healthcare, and for our families and ourselves.

The opposition we beat in the 2008 election, now wants to save taxes for millionaires and cut services to our people. We Americans need roads repaired, the mentally ill cared for, our children protected, clean water, and support for the developmentally disabled. The opposition wants to cut unemployment payments, social security, and the federal dollars that are creating public and private jobs.

### Stand Up and Vote

Those we defeated in 2008 are pouring millions into campaigns to push America backward. We cannot sit down and let the cynics steal our enthusiasm to build a just society where all of us live with dignity. We can win.



**STAND UP AND VOTE**  
**TAKE TEN TO THE POLLS**

### NEW JERSEY

## Massive Rally to Fight Cruel Budget Cuts

On May 22, a crowd estimated at 38,000, including thousands of CWA members, flooded into Trenton, New Jersey to protest Governor Chris Christie's budget.

Some 7,000 CWA members from more than 30 public and private sector locals were joined by 20 other unions and more than 100 organizations and community groups. Officials from CWA locals also participated: President Joe Barca (1103), President Arthur Cheliotos and Vice President Bill Henning (1180).

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A sea of public workers, activists and community supporters fills the grounds of the state capitol in Trenton to protest Governor Christie's budget.

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# VOTE November 2

Brooks Sunkett, VP, Public, Healthcare & Education Workers Department

In the 1960s students, workers, seniors, small farmers, teachers, and clergy built a movement for African Americans to have the same right to vote as all Americans. The establishment rose up in opposition.

On February 26, 1965 in a small Alabama town, one grandfather with his 16-year-old grandson, Jimmie Lee Jackson, went to the courthouse to register to vote. When his grandfather was attacked, Jimmie Lee Jackson tried to stop his grandfather from being beaten and was shot dead. The voting rights movement resolved to carry his body to the State Capitol in Montgomery.

On March 7, 1965, 600 Americans led by John Lewis of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee and Hosea Williams of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference marched out of Selma and attempted to cross the Edmund Pettus Bridge. As the marchers crossed the bridge on their way to Montgomery they were attacked. Men, women, old and young were beaten—heads were cracked, bodies bashed. There was no mercy for the nonviolent voting rights activists.

Today across the U.S. the richest 2% does not want us to vote. The establishment is spending millions to support cynics and critics who try to convince America not to vote or that voting is futile—this is just what the establishment in 1965 wanted us to think. Every step our President and Congress have tried to take to rebuild our economy has been slowed,

diluted, and stymied. In our states, counties, and cities, the budget cutters have tried to shift the cost of the recession onto our backs.

Should we let the ultra rich have their tax cuts leaving no money for our pensions or should we stand up and vote?

We can sit back as the cynics and the rich want us to do or we can stand up and vote. We are 124,000 CWA Public Workers who can make a difference in this coming election. We can win if we stand up and talk to TEN. We can talk to and take TEN to the polls. If we each take TEN that's over one million votes.

In the weeks before the elections we must talk to our families, friends, neighbors, and co-workers. Who wins if we do not vote? The richest 2%, the cynics, and the critics win. We will pay with cuts to our pensions, and pay if we choose to sit silently.

We have to talk so each of us has TEN to take to the polls. One on one talking can make a difference. We have to stand up like Jimmie Lee Jackson did. We have the right to vote because others shed blood for our right. We cannot sit out this election, we have to vote and take TEN to the polls.



**TALK AND TAKE TEN TO THE POLLS  
VOTE NOVEMBER 2ND**

## Talking UNION

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## Texas State employees, services targeted in budget squeeze

When the Texas legislature meets in January, it will face what could be the toughest budget issues in decades.

As of March, state tax revenue was 12.5% less than it was in 2009. A 33% increase in federal funds has raised overall revenue, but most of the increase is stimulus funding that will end during the next year. Estimates are that the state will have about \$18 billion less in 2011 than in 2009. Cuts have already begun—5% at most agencies and universities—and will take effect soon.

Anti-government activists have long had the goal of “shrinking government until we could drown it in a bathtub.” Many of them think this

will be their most successful year ever. Newly-elected state Rep. Van Taylor of Plano said that now is the time to “starve state government.”

It is the same story for government employees all across the country as governors and legislatures move to slash budgets.

Texas State Employees Union (TSEU) is the largest membership-based group in Texas to defend state services and employees. This year, many legislative allies will be tempted to cave in to calls for budget cuts at the expense of working people. It is the role of every state employee to be involved in the struggle alongside TSEU, because this fight will not be won from the sidelines.

## Massive New Jersey Rally continued from page 1

Addressing the crowd, CWA District 1 Vice President Chris Shelton said, “we are experiencing the most severe, pervasive and sustained attack on public employees, public employee unions and public sector collective bargaining” since workers got the right to organize. “We are fed up, and we are not going to take it anymore.”



**NJ public workers stand up for quality education and quality services.**

Republican Gov. Christie proposed a budget that would devastate services for the disabled and elderly, and slash funding for education

and local government.

Christie also vetoed a bill that would have raised taxes on millionaires to offset the pain felt by the public.

## Project to Help Patients, Staff at Jersey Public Hospital Wins Major Award

CWA members who created and led a project to reduce the use of patient restraints at Ancora Psychiatric Hospital have won first place in a statewide quality improvement competition, beating more than 60 other entries. The Richard Codey Behavioral Healthcare Quality Improvement Trophy is named for a former New Jersey governor who long supported mental health care services.



**With Ancora CEO Allan Boyer, far left, are some of the winning team’s members. From left: Lisa Givens, RN of CWA, Dennis Faliciano of ASFCME, psychologists Jeff Uhl and Dena Young, Dhea Santana and Elisa Boisseau, RN all of CWA.**

By creating new quiet areas called “walk off zones” for patients in distress and using other de-escalation techniques, the CWA team of psychologists, nurses and support staff reduced patient restraint use by 58% and staff injuries by 93%.

“This demonstrates that public employees are innovative and that we not only can compete with, but exceed the private sector in delivering quality patient care,” said Dr. Jeffrey Uhl, a psychologist and member of Local 1040 who was one of the team leaders.

“That’s extremely important for people to know when the privatization of state hospitals is being explored.”

## NJ Local 1032 Says “Keep Public Broadcasting, Public”

Gov. Chris Christie and New Jersey Network’s (NJN) interim director, had set a July 1 deadline to turn the publicly-owned system over to a non-profit corporation. Instead, Senate and Assembly committees created a commission that will report back by October 15.



**Some of the Local 1032 members working at NJN, at the network’s Trenton studios.**

Local 1032 members, determined to save public broadcasting, suspect that a private owner would sell off, or merge, NJN’s assets. Now, residents count on NJN for local coverage that is unavailable on other channels.

“When people think of New Jersey, they think of the Jersey Shore, Rutgers and NJN,” Local 1032 President Patrick Kavanagh said. “That will no longer be the case if New Jersey loses control of these major television and radio assets.”

Log on to [www.saveNJN.com](http://www.saveNJN.com) for more information.

### More from New Jersey...

Local 1040 won an election among 69 non-professional workers at the Bo Robinson Community Education Center in Trenton. Workers withstood a full-on anti-union campaign to win 54-0. A strong inside committee ensured the victory. The first captive audience meeting was canceled when fire alarms went off and during the rescheduled meeting every worker wore a CWA sticker. Organizer Connie English and Staff Representative Chris Young worked on this campaign. Congratulations go out to the organizers and President Carolyn Wade.

Local 1088 won recognition through card check for five blue collar employees at the Borough of Island Heights in Ocean County. Local President Matt Guthorn led the organizing effort with assistance from Staff Representative Lynn Buckley.

# Public Employee Pension Protection: Stop the Race to the Bottom

*Public Sector Resolution approved at the 2010 CWA Convention*

Employee pensions are under attack. The aggressive corporate assault on defined benefit pension plans, plans which provide a more secure framework for retirement, has decimated coverage in the private sector, and today fewer than 20% of private sector workers are covered by a defined benefit plan. Now some politicians and others have targeted public employees' pension benefits, and with roughly 80% of public employees covered by defined benefit plans, they now find that their pension plans are under siege.

To be sure, the average pension benefit of a public sector retiree is higher than that of the average retiree from the private sector. A number of factors contribute to this. First, union representation of 40% in the public sector compared to only 7% in the private sector strengthens public employee negotiating power and secures better pension benefits. Second, public employees have historically traded lower wages for a secure pension as a form of deferred compensation. Third, public employee pension funds receive contributions from both employees and employers and, as such, represent the accumulation of workers' own contributions and their deferred wages.

Recently, some legislators and policy makers at all levels, as well as media pundits, have begun attacking public sector workers with exaggerated claims about public worker pensions and compensation. They are making scapegoats of public workers, suggesting they are the cause of budget shortfalls rather than acknowledging that a troubled economy and misguided tax and fiscal policies have endangered public budgets and threatened the social safety net. As part of these attacks, misguided politicians propose to diminish the pension plan to a defined contribution plan which is more costly to administer and shifts investment risk to individuals. These groups seek to pressure public employees into making concessions and to give back the pension benefits that they rely on for a secure retirement.

Rather than race to the bottom, we should all unite to protect every American's retirement security.

Public pension plans are important pools of investment capital, owning 8% of corporate America. We should be an effective voice for corporate governance. Investments should be made transparently, with independent audits and we should seek to invest in local regions with a long-run horizon. As workers accrue pension benefits over their careers, we must work to develop mechanisms to permit portable benefits. Further, given the importance of pension decisions, workers must be represented on pension boards and should have access to retirement education programs.

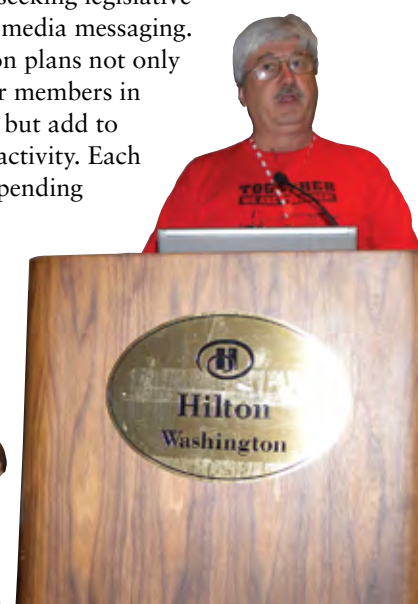


Recognizing that we cannot win this battle alone, and that both private and public sector workers are seeing an assault on their pension benefits, we must join together, regardless of our employer, and work with other unions to learn from each other and to develop creative pension strategies, both offensive and defensive, such as identifying alternative cost savings, launching legal challenges, negotiating solutions, seeking legislative relief, and media messaging.

Pension plans not only protect our members in retirement but add to economic activity. Each dollar of spending



Left: The Goodman family, receiving award  
Right: Cameron Brooks and Mike Gross





Top: Rae Roeder, President, Local 1033  
Bottom: Bradley Harmon, President, Local 6355, Missouri State Workers Union



the development of retirement education programs tailored to local needs and to the wide dissemination of this information among our members.

**Resolved:** CWA public sector bargaining units are encouraged to seek representation on boards that oversee pension funds that cover their members. These representatives would be expected to participate in educational forums to improve their understanding of pension practices and concepts.

**Resolved:** CWA members and leaders should speak out in public forums to correct false information about public workers to stop elected officials and public figures from using public workers as scapegoats for failed economic and fiscal policies.

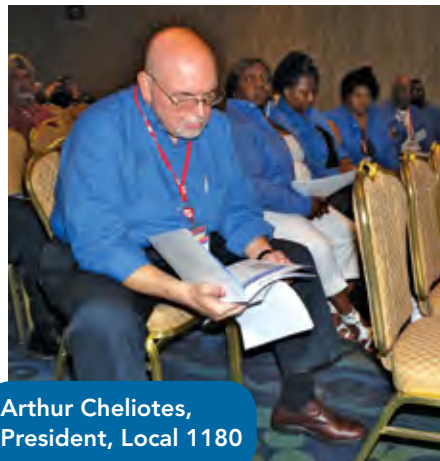
**Resolved:** CWA should seek broad political support for adequate retirement income and to protect pension plans and Social Security.

creates \$2.36 in economic activity in the surrounding community.

Providing secure retirement income built on pensions, Social Security, and savings for all Americans remains a principal goal of CWA.

**Resolved:** Defined benefit plans provide the gold standard for retirement income. Wherever possible, we should strive to establish and maintain defined benefit plans for public employees.

**Resolved:** The Union, at both the national and local levels, commits to



Arthur Cheliotos, President, Local 1180

## ROSAMARIE TORRES, CWA Activist, Passes Away

Rosamarie Torres, who was a CWA legislative representative in Washington, D.C. and helped to build the Texas State Employees Union, died July 24.



In 1997, when Rosie joined the CWA staff in Washington, she focused on social security, health care, and public sector issues,

tirelessly opposing legislation detrimental to union workers and their families.

Rosie earned a Master's degree in labor studies at Rutgers University's Labor Education Center and later moved to Austin, Texas, to become a legislative liaison for the Texas Alliance for Human Needs. In 1985, Rosie became a legislative aide to Texas Sen. Carlos Truan.

Rosie's husband, Eduardo Diaz, died in 2000. She is survived by their 13-year-old daughter, Victoria.

Rosie's love of life, love for her family and love for her union, made her a wonderful person. Her life was too short and she will be dearly missed.

## DOROTHY HEIGHT, Giant of the Civil Rights Era, Dies



Dorothy Height's career in civil rights spanned nearly 80 years, from anti-lynching protests in the early 1930s to the inauguration of President Obama in 2009.

Height was president of the National Council of Negro Women from 1957 to 1997, overseeing programs on voting rights, poverty and in later years, AIDS. A longtime executive of the Y.W.C.A., she presided over the integration of its facilities nationwide in the 1940s. In 1971, Height was one of the founders of the National Women's Political Caucus.

Height is widely credited as the first person in the modern civil rights era to treat the problems of equality for women and equality for African-Americans as a seamless whole.

President Clinton awarded Height the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 1994.

Her recently published memoir is titled *Open Wide the Freedom Gates*.

### NEW YORK

## Unfair Labor Practice Strike at Red Cross

Local 1122 represents 160 Red Cross workers in Buffalo who have been working without a contract since May 2009.

CWA has filed several unfair labor practices charges against the Red Cross over serious contract violations. The Red Cross drastically changed workers' health care coverage, eliminated retiree health care, eliminated the defined pension benefit for new hires and eliminated the company's match to the 401k plan, all without bargaining over the changes, which labor law requires.

Separately, members of Local 13500 in northeastern Pennsylvania are continuing to bargain with the Red Cross; that contract was extended to June 8. Issues are the company's demand for health care cost shifting and pay treatment for last minute changes in scheduling and weekend work assignments.

CWA members are not standing alone; five other unions are also participating at different locations.

## Regents considers cuts to retirement benefits

The University of California (UC) regents may move to make unprecedented cuts to the UC Retirement System (UCRS). They will consider recommendations from their appointed “Post-Employment Benefits Task Force,” which generally represent a decrease in both access to and the level of benefits.

The Task Force’s plan would dramatically increase employee pension contributions up to 7% in 2013, and establish an inferior “Tier Two” plan for all new hires as well as existing employees who “opt” into it. “When UC begins offering different tiers of benefits, we all suffer,” said Jelger Kalmijn, UPTE’s president. “Not only do our co-workers get worse benefits than we do, but fewer participants in the defined benefit plan means that there is less principal to invest and greater risk to share among fewer participants.”

The plan would also dramatically reduce retiree health care provisions.

Right now, the UCRS “defined benefit plan” is about 95% funded,

which means it is quite healthy. “Encouraging participants to leave the fund would be a move in the wrong direction,” added Kalmijn.

### Pension Plans Comparison

#### DEFINED BENEFIT PLAN (like UCRS)

- Lifetime income based on years of service, salary and age
- Guaranteed benefits, lower risks
- Paid out of a pool of invested assets
- Better investment returns, professional management with lower costs

#### DEFINED CONTRIBUTION PLAN (like a 401k)

- Employees bear all the risk for investment losses
- Can’t guarantee your benefits or deliver the same level of benefits with the same level of funding
- Can’t pay disability pensions or cost of living adjustments
- Has higher administrative costs for both employer and employee

## Pension funding a sticking point in HX bargaining

UPTE’s health care professionals (HX) bargaining team is very close to settling a contract, but the University of California (UC) is determined to single out the unit for additional pension contributions.

“UC has no financial incentive for holding up our contract,” said Wendi Felson, UPTE’s chief negotiator for the HX unit and a retired UCSF (San Francisco) clinical lab technologist. “This is about controlling our ability to bargain with our union brothers and sisters.”

Financially, there is nothing at stake for UC. UPTE’s bargaining team has agreed to take .5% off a proposed wage increase in exchange for UC dropping its demand for an additional .5% from employees’ paychecks to the UCRS pension fund.

“If HX or any other unit is forced to bargain alone over pension contributions, we’ll all lose,” said Sonia Palacio, a UCI clinical social worker and a member of the bargaining team.



## Local 9413 Hospital Workers Ratify First Contract

Technical workers at St. Mary’s Hospital in Reno, Nev., will get a 9.5% raise over the next two years under a first contract ratified by the new members of the local.

The 170-member unit cast a 98% “yes” vote on the contract, which includes a \$1,000 bonus for workers with special certification, holds the line on health care and separates sick leave from personal time.

Local 9413 Executive Vice President Liz Sorenson said she began organizing the pharmacy techs, radiology techs, respiratory therapists and other technical employees about a year ago, shortly after organizing 570 service workers at the hospital.

Sorenson credited the bargaining team for “amazing” work. Members included technical workers Harley Tate, Jerri Giminez, chief negotiator Valerie Reyna from District 9, and Chris Kennedy from the PHEW Office.

## Pete Goodman, California labor activist dies

UPTE is mourning the loss of its founding president, Pete Goodman, who died on May Day at the age of 89.

Pete spent his life as a passionate, articulate force in support of the rights and dignity of working people around the world. UPTE’s executive board learned of Pete’s death as it began its May meeting and passed a resolution in his honor (see [www.upte.org/petegoodman.html](http://www.upte.org/petegoodman.html)). It notes his long legacy of labor activism, from organizing merchant marines in the 1940s, to his pioneering support of women’s and civil rights, and his help founding UPTE at the University of California in 1990. He will be missed.



## CWA/OSWU Sends Election Year Message To Legislators

# “GET WELL or GET OUT OF OFFICE!”

Oklahoma State Workers Union (CWA/OSWU) members began their “Get Well or Get Out of Office” campaign in July after suffering through several “sick” legislative years without pay raises, continued attacks on benefits, reductions in staffing, inadequate agency funding for front-line employees, and furloughs. In the same years, agency heads received huge pay increases and wealthy corporations, tax breaks.

Several members from various state agencies met in Oklahoma City to interview candidates and legislators running for re-election, and to inform them about the issues and ask them to sign letters of support. CWA/OSWU members also tried to ensure that chosen candidates, and in some cases members, were endorsed at the state COPE convention.

Rep. Wallace Collins from Norman, Okla. was one of many to sign a letter of support and to request assistance in his campaign while listening to members discuss the issues.

Former state Senator Jim Wilson, who is running for U.S. Congress, said,

“The people have to take control of the Republican-run House if we expect to see change and working campaigns is the way working people can do that.”

At the COPE convention, CWA/OSWU Vice-President Alonzo Candler stated, “We must get the people to see they come before the change, not the change before the people!” CWA/OSWU members have decided to mobilize every member to do at least one thing this election cycle in order to have an impact during the next legislative session.

OSWU is circulating “Get Well” cards throughout the state, to be personally noted and signed by at least 1000 members by February 2011 so they can be hand-delivered to state



legislators. The cards simply say “GET WELL WISHES OR GET OUT OF OFFICE!”

Members are also

hosting town hall meetings with legislators to present a diagnosis and provide legislators with a prescription to support state worker issues. Legislators will then be asked to sign a guaranty letter of payment if they plan to “GET WELL” or they will be told to “GET OUT” in November!

## ARIZONA

# AZCOPS Keeps Dept. of Juvenile Corrections Working

In a six-week campaign this spring, AZCOPS and juvenile corrections associations in Maricopa and Pima counties stopped Gov. Jan Brewer from closing the Arizona Department of Juvenile Corrections (ADJC). Because of AZCOPS’ leadership to go to bat for its members, hundreds of juvenile corrections officers still have jobs.

AZCOPS and the juvenile corrections associations put pressure on the Governor by taking their message to the public. First, the Pima Juvenile Corrections Association (PJCA) produced radio ads. Then PJCA and

the Maricopa Juvenile Corrections Association printed thousands of door hangers and distributed them from Nogales to Scottsdale, warning the public of safety issues that could result from the proposed closure. The associations followed with radio spots in the Phoenix and Tucson areas.

AZCOPS hired a public relations firm to ramp up the media campaign. They produced postcards about the safety issues and named legislators who needed to be “educated” about the Governor’s proposal. Automated calls went out three days after the cards, to

remind voters to call politicians to voice their opinions.

AZCOPS also launched a website about the issue, and supporters blogged and shared stories on Facebook. As the public safety message played out, AZCOPS expressly requested support from legislators.

All of the activity paid off when the County Boards of Supervisors offered funding to keep ADJC open for another year, and the budget was adopted. As election season begins, it is clear to candidates that AZCOPS stands up for its members.

## Members Rally in Phoenix to Oppose Cuts

On May 3, hundreds of state employees and members of the Arizona State Employees Association-CWA Local 7055, rallied in Phoenix to fight against budget cuts. Speakers insisted that legislators must realize that state employees are hard working, taxpaying individuals who want to maintain their employment like other citizens. At a time when state employees are being asked to make substantial sacrifices and take pay cuts, legislators should also be willing to make those same sacrifices.

Chris Ibarra, an state employee, said, "In these difficult times, we need to look to state employees as a valuable asset and resource. We do the same work better, and at less cost, than the private sector."

Randy Parraz, a candidate for U.S. Senate in Arizona, stated, "People are losing jobs and homes, and are holding on to their dignity with a shoestring.

The 2008 financial crisis was not caused by immigrants—it was caused by the naked greed and reckless behavior of the biggest financial institutions. Joblessness, not immigrants, is causing unemployment."



Hundreds of state workers have already been laid off or forced to take furloughs that amount to anywhere from a 10 to 24% pay cut. Cuts in pay have created an unintended consequence—turnover. Turnover in some agencies is now as high as 35%, costing the state over \$58 million annually.

Because of the attacks focused on state employees, more are joining CWA to fight for fairness and respect.

## State Promises Workers One-Time Stipend

The state Senate overwhelmingly passed a budget (30-3), and the House followed suit (94-0) ending the 106th General Assembly. Another year has come without a pay raise and hundreds of higher education workers facing layoffs before federal stimulus monies run out in June 2011.

Hundreds of members sent letters, made phone calls, and took days off work to lobby elected officials in Nashville. All of this prevented a threatened 5% pay cut. The union also stopped massive layoffs and made real steps forward for higher education due process rights.

Most importantly the strength of Campus Workers United (UCW-CWA) has grown across the state as the union now has a presence on eight campuses with 1,100 members.

The budget includes "an additional longevity payment" meant to provide a



**UTHSC members met to plan further efforts to save jobs.**

one-time workload stipend to recognize the massive increases in workloads over the past few years. This payment, which is contingent on state tax collections, will be \$50 per year of service with a minimum of \$150 and a maximum of \$1,250 and is scheduled for the end of October for all employ-

ees with one year of service as of October 1, 2010.

UCW-CWA will move forward in the fight against layoffs. In Memphis, the University of Tennessee Health Science Center (UTHSC) has continued with plans for reductions in force, despite having received over \$30 million in federal stimulus funds and state matching dollars. Michelle Burrell, a UCW-CWA leader and six-year employee of UTHSC points out the contradiction of laying off hard-working staff at the same time UTHSC just hired a new chancellor at \$525,000 annually. "We need justifications for these proposed layoffs...how can they spend that kind of money while laying off much less expensive workers?"

Many tasks lie ahead for UCW-CWA, but as the song goes, "Our union makes us strong!" And together, united, members will improve their lives.