



OFFICE OF THE VICE PRESIDENT

March 1, 2011

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

As you know we are facing a very difficult negotiation in the state worker contract, a disastrous budget and a dangerous legislature that may have a **direct impact on every public sector member in this State**. Governor Christie is looking to dismantle our pension system and shift 30% of healthcare costs to every government worker, and we are sure we will have a fight not only over wage increases, but possibly job security and more.

Although CWA has been seeking to start state worker bargaining, the Governor has been stalling negotiations, finally giving us tentative dates last week. This would be bad enough, but a week and a half ago, without notice or any consideration, the State Senate President - Steve Sweeney - held a surprise press conference announcing his own legislation that would take healthcare out of collective bargaining. **We now have a crisis.**

If Sweeney's bill moves (and his co-sponsor is Republican Jennifer Beck which leads us to believe that he has made a deal with the Governor) it will cripple collective bargaining in New Jersey. It means that we will not be able to bargain healthcare anywhere – state, local government, authorities, Judiciary – because negotiations are preempted by the Sweeney legislation. Negotiating a different healthcare premium-share would be illegal, whether or not you are in the State Health Benefits Plan or any other plan.

In Wisconsin, Governor Walker is trying to eliminate all public sector collective bargaining except for bargaining of wages. The effect of the Sweeney bill is to remove all right to bargain our health benefits now or in the future. It makes negotiations around healthcare illegal.

We cannot allow that to happen.

We have prepared an initial healthcare proposal and we are sending it directly to the State's Office of Employee Relations to try to force this issue to the table. We are going to demand of the Legislature that they respect our right to bargain healthcare rights and reject these Wisconsin-like tactics to destroy collective bargaining.

Maintaining affordable healthcare is going to be a great struggle and we are going to do the very best that we can. In order to have a chance at this, we have to keep this issue out of legislation and at the table and to do that, we need to put healthcare on the table right now.

Here is our plan:

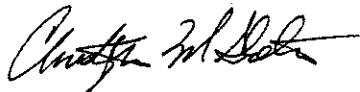
1. **Bargaining** – We are scheduling multiple negotiations dates in March with the Governor’s representatives. We intend to deal with health benefits as a central issue right up front. We are coordinating with other unions representing both state and local government to ensure we have unified messages and are sharing information.
2. **Legislature** – We are asking for written pledges of support from the Legislature to try to stop the health benefits bill. We are scheduling Lobby Days with all Unions for March 14 and 21. We are also scheduling in-district meetings with legislators. For those who won’t sign the pledge, we are planning demonstrations to hold them accountable.
3. **Worksite Activity** – If legislation moves unexpectedly, we will need to react forcefully and quickly. Every member’s health benefits now and in retirement is at stake. We need every member to commit to taking time off to help stop this bill – whether at the State House or at an in-district meeting or in another way.

Additionally, we are distributing contract surveys this week. These surveys are designed to really understand what our members’ priorities are and where our fight will be. Please fill them out. They are critical.

Come to worksite meetings, contact your Local, and keep informed *daily*.

In addition, we must, must, must have your personal contact information. We need your personal email and home and cell numbers. We cannot get your information through the Employer’s email system – they are monitoring it and we believe there are false emails going out. We need to be able to contact you through the information you have given us and we need to be able to give you information quickly.

In Solidarity,



Chris Shelton
Vice President, District 1