



The Siren

Important News and Updates for NYSPFFA Members

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NEW YORK, OTHER STATES SEEK FEDERAL AID FOR STORM RECOVERY

Earlier this month, Gov. Cuomo traveled to Washington D.C., to lobby the Obama Administration and Congressional leaders in support of his request for \$42 billion in federal aid for the state to help rebuild from Superstorm Sandy. Not long after that trip, the White House submitted to Congress a \$60.4 billion request for emergency relief funding to help New York, New Jersey and neighboring East Coast states recover from the storm. The Administration's request is about 75% of what the regions' Governors asked for.

This funding request is a good start. But there are concerns that this funding request may be stalled as the President and Congress have not yet been able to reach agreement on avoiding the so-called "fiscal cliff."

Gov. Cuomo and other state elected officials have enlisted 125 prominent business leaders in the effort. New York is also coordinating with officials from New Jersey and Connecticut.

These federal funds are critical to getting our communities back to where they were before the storm hit.

CALENDAR

March 4-6—[Cornell Labor Seminar](#)

May 6-8 2013—[NYSPFFA Legislative Conference](#)

June 24-27, 2013—[NYSPFFA Annual Convention](#)

If you have any questions or concerns regarding the information in this newsletter, please contact Joseph Dougherty or John Black at (518) 436-0751. For other NYSPFF matters, please contact Mike McManus or Sam Fresina at (518) 436-8827.

ALBANY UPDATE

Bi-Partisan Coalition to Control State Senate

The question of whether GOP or the Democrats will control the State Senate in 2013 has finally been resolved, and the answer is...neither.

Thirty Senate Republicans have joined with five Independent Democrats and one newly elected Democratic Senator from Brooklyn and entered into a power-sharing agreement. They will be known as the Senate Majority Coalition.

Instead of being led by a single majority leader, the position of Temporary President of the Senate will be held alternately on a bi-weekly basis by Republican Leader Dean Skelos and Independent Democratic Conference Leader Jeff Klein.

The agreement provides that the Senate Republicans and the Independent Democratic Conference (IDC) will have "joint and equal authority" over legislation, appointments, and budget negotiations.

The agreement is expected to leave the Senate Republicans with substantial influence over the Senate's operations and legislative agenda. But the inclusion of Democrats in the group may open the door to more progressive legislation being taken up by the Senate, such as increasing the minimum-wage, reforming the state's marijuana laws and making changes to the state's campaign finance laws.

There is no precedent in Albany for a "coalition government" of this nature, so everyone will

be watching this situation closely to see how it works.

In other political news, GOP Senate candidate George Amedore has declared victory in his race for the newly created 46th Senate seat. But Democrat Cecilia Tkaczyk has not conceded, and the matter will go to the courts.

COURT RULES FOR 9/11 RESPONDERS

The state's highest court has [ruled](#) in favor of two retired police officers who became sick after working at Ground Zero, as well as the widow of a third officer who has since died. The Court awarded them enhanced pension benefits, overturning the initial decision of the city's police pension fund.

This is the Court's first ruling addressing the presumption that officers who develop certain ailments, including cancer, became sick due to the time they spent at ground zero in the wake of the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks.

This is an important decision, because it means that retirement systems and pension funds can't simply deny a claimant — they have to present medical evidence to show that the illnesses in question were not related to their service at Ground Zero.

MANDATE RELIEF COUNCIL DECLINES TO ACT TO REPEAL TRIBOROUGH

Gov. Cuomo's [Mandate Relief Council](#) (MRC), which was created to reduce burdens on local governments and school districts, was recently asked to take steps to have the Governor and Legislature repeal the "Triborough Amendment."

Triborough provides that when a contract expires, the employer cannot unilaterally lower wages or diminish other contractual terms and conditions of employment, so long as the union refrains from striking. It's intended to provide balance in labor negotiations, and we think it strikes the right balance.

Although the MRC voted unanimously against the request, Chairman Schwartz said that his vote was "not for or against Triborough just that it does not fit within the narrow scope" of the Mandate Relief Commission's authority.

We are pleased that the MRC has decided not to take action to undermine this important worker protection for working people.