



**Construction & General Building
Laborers' Local 79**
520 8th Avenue, Suite 679
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RETIREE NEWSLETTER | SUMMER 2019

LOCAL 79 NEWS

CONSTRUCTION & GENERAL BUILDING LABORERS



Local 79 Fights for Free Speech Fed Gov Lawsuit Fails to Shut Down Protests

WHEN FACING A LEGAL CASE THAT RECEIVED NATIONAL PRESS AND HAS POTENTIAL RAMIFICATIONS FOR THE ENTIRE COUNTRY, OUR UNION HAS NOT BACKED DOWN.

On behalf of the Mannix Family ShopRites, the Presidentially-appointed lawyers of the National Labor Relations Board attempted to shut our protests down and stop our use of inflatable rats to speak out against worker exploitation. In blatant disregard of our right to free speech, Peter Robb, the NLRB General Counsel, has launched a vendetta against Scabby the Rat, which is no surprise because he used to work as a union-busting lawyer. Rising up against this attempted violation of the 1st Amendment, rank-and-file members of Local 79 and our allies throughout the labor movement rallied at Federal Hall steps, where the Bill of Rights was proposed and ratified. MTDC General Counsel Tamir Rosenblum believes that this "campaign to eradicate workers' free speech is an attack on us all. Our inflatable rats are raw symbols of dissent and I am confident we will legally prevail." A federal judge denied the initial injunction request against us, but we know that the fight is not over.

OFFICE CHANGE COMING SOON!

Our union is approaching another important milestone – the official opening of our very own office space at 131 W 33rd Street. We all thank Secretary-Treasurer Kenneth Brancaccio and his entire team for the work they have put into designing our new union hall and vetting bids from different signatory contractors. The current tenant is moving out in September and we plan to move in by the end of this year. Our new Class A space will be a short walk from the Trust Funds and is centrally located in a transportation hub that includes Penn Station, Manhattan Mall, Herald Square, Madison Square Garden, Grand Central and the Port Authority.

LEARN MORE > www.local79.com



Newly-appointed Director Anna Gutsin with Labor Trustees Mike Prohaska, Bobby Bonanza & Chaz Rynkiewicz. (Not pictured is Labor Trustee Co-Chair Ray Pocino.)

John Virga Retires; Anna Gutsin Announced as Replacement

After decades of service as the Director of the Mason Tenders Trust Funds, John Virga's retirement was announced at our January Membership Meeting. Under the stewardship of John and the trustees, Local 79 members continually saw our funds increase benefits and strengthen future security. At the June Membership Meeting, Anna Gutsin was announced as the new Trust Funds Director. Anna previously was the Pension Director at 1199SEIU and brings decades of financial expertise. The trustees are confident that Anna will continue John's legacy of responsible and proactive leadership.

UPCOMING EVENTS 2019

Call Melissa Siciliano at
212-465-7976 to RSVP

September 15 at 11am
African-American Day Parade
112th & Adam Clayton Powell Blvd

September 17 is cancelled!
The Belmont Races Trip was
cancelled due to construction.

October 14 at 10:30am
75th Annual Columbus Day Parade
*Location To be Determined

October 18 at 8am
Atlantic City Casino & Resort
2831 Boardwalk, Atlantic City, NJ

October 24 at 8am
Mohegan Sun Casino & Resort
1 Mohegan Sun Blvd, Uncasville, CT

December 6 at 12pm
Retiree Holiday Party
Russo's On The Bay, Queens

www.local79.org

DUES NEWS
Member Dues: \$37/month
Retiree Dues: \$8/month

REMINDER: Dues payments must not go over two months without being paid or the member will be suspended.

Members’ Union Book numbers must be written on their checks or money orders when paying dues by mail. Members may also call the Dues Department and provide their book number to pay by credit card.

Notice of Death:

It is with great sadness that we inform you of the passing of Timothy Campbell. Timmy had been a valued member of our local since 1983 and served as a Business Agent for over a decade. Timmy will be missed. Please keep the Campbell family in your thoughts as they go through this difficult time.

TRUST FUNDS SUMMARY



Members also should feel secure knowing that their Pension Fund is currently 103.1% funded and that our Medical/Welfare Fund has over 24 months in reserves. Last year, the Annuity Fund’s investment return was -.24%, which vastly outperformed the market as the S&P 500 finished the year at -6.2%.

LOCAL 79 EXECUTIVE BOARD

- Mike Prohaska, Business Manager
- Anthony Vita, President
- John Norbury, Vice President
- Kenneth Brancaccio, Secretary-Treasurer
- Joe Cestaro, Recording Secretary
- Barrie Smith, Sergeant-at-Arms
- Chaz Rynkiewicz, Executive Board member
- Jose Andino, Executive Board member
- Luis Montalvo, Auditor
- Anthony Williamson, Auditor
- Kenneth Robinson Jr., Auditor

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An affiliate of: the Mason Tenders District Council of Greater New York and Long Island, LiUNA; the New York City Central Labor Council; the Building and Construction Trades Council of Greater New York; and the New York State AFL-CIO.

  **Follow us on Facebook & Twitter**
Contact information, events calendar, news, and general information can be found at www.local79.org

**MESSAGE FROM
BUSINESS MANAGER
MIKE PROHASKA**

Once again, our union is on pace to work a record-breaking number of hours this year, having already set an all-time monthly record this June. The summer was long and hot, but we did not slow down and only picked up our pace.

Thank you to all that participated in our Coney Island Walk. The dedication of the Laborers Care Room at St. Mary’s Children Hospital is one of my proudest moments as Business Manager. Our union has reached our \$500,000 fundraising commitment. We are now looking for the next cause for our local to commit to.

Even as our union stands stronger than ever, corporate America is waging a full-fledged war trying to defeat us and our way of life. We are part of a national mobilization that aims to stop the federal Department of Labor from allowing low-quality apprenticeship programs. In a reversal of the previous administration, the current labor board is now focusing more on pursuing unfair labor charges against unions than the employers.

Our hard-earned retirement benefits are also under attack and current proposals can directly impact your and my pension. Senate Republicans led by Mitch McConnell are helping bailed-out banks responsible for the 2008 stock market crash, but refuse to support struggling Midwestern pension funds. Instead, the Republican Senate Leader is pushing for regulations of the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation that would change the rules for calculating actuarial assumptions of future returns, which would nearly double the amount of pension funds considered in the red and in need of restructuring. Don’t fall for the rhetoric of balanced budgets, this is a ruse to divide workers and attack the hard-earned retirement benefits of millions of union members.

Rest assured that our General President Terry O’Sullivan is doing everything he can to fight back. One issue that Terry often highlights is the importance of making sure LiUNA members are registered and getting out to vote. Politicians can now check how many of our members have voted in the last election. If you are unsure of whether you are registered or don’t know where you can vote, feel free to call Ari at 646-721-1235.

I encourage everyone to stay very active with Local 79, because you are the strength of the union. Each day you can find possible locations by calling 347-465-7957. The federal government is trying to take our ability to protest, so we need all hands-on deck. Also, the next generation needs to learn from you about the hard work and commitment it took to make Local 79 what it is today. On behalf of the entire Executive Board, we thank you again for your past and current dedication to our union.

In solidarity,



Mike Prohaska



Bronx Brigade Builds Power

“I grew up in a Bronx that was burning,” said Business Manager Mike Prohaska in April. “Now, it’s building. We need to start organizing in our communities to make sure that nothing built for us is done without us.”

In reaction to the construction boom in the Bronx, members began to mobilize to protect their neighborhoods. Local 79’s Bronx Brigade is a rank-and-file movement fighting for local workers to have a fair share in economic growth. Union careers with health care and retirement



security can provide a pathway to the middle-class.

In a show of collective force, the Bronx Brigade took the streets outside 556 Bergen Avenue in June to protest Mountco, the

site’s general contractor. The project received hundreds of millions of dollars in city funds, but still MountCo was chosen despite the city’s Labor Monitoring Unit showing over \$700,000 in back-wage settlements from the company and its subcontractors at 3 different addresses.

Rallygoers demanded public accountability for taxpayer funds. Councilmember Rafael Salamanca joined the Bronx Brigade at the rally and said, “I stand in solidarity with the laborers and the entire labor movement. We need to push for prevailing wages to ensure that responsible contractors are hired on publicly funded projects.”

9/11 Heroes Receive Funding



9/11 Organizers & Retirees went to Washington D.C. to fight for funding the 9/11 Victim Compensation Fund.

In our current age of political gridlock, many common-sense issues are passed over at the wayside. One would think that quick consensus could be reached about the health and well-being of 9/11 First Responders. Yet, still the reauthorization of the Victim Compensation Fund was stonewalled this summer. Republican Senator Rand Paul filibustered the Senate even after Luis Alvarez, an NYPD detective, died in June - one of more than 2,000 first-responders at Ground Zero that have died of an illness related to the attack.

Luis had joined thousands of union first-responders in pressuring Congress to back up their claim to “never forget” our heroes. Thanks to their efforts, the permanent financing of the 9/11 Victim Compensation Fund was passed on July 29th. Many Local 79 members volunteered and worked to rebuild our city after this national disaster. If you believe that you have a 9/11-related condition, you can receive a WTC Health Program Disability Evaluation after filing a claim, which can be filed online at vcf.gov/register or you can request a hard copy by calling 855-885-1555.

