

## Newly-Elected Comptroller Visits C400 Delegates

Council 400 Delegates were excited to welcome our new Comptroller, Sean Scanlon (pictured at right with Council VP Patrice Peterson) to our January hybrid delegates meeting. The Office of the State Comptroller administers state employee

and retiree benefits as well as overseeing the State Partnership Program which is the health plan for many municipal and BOE employees. Considering OSC's key role, CSEA has always worked

closely with the Comptroller to protect and enhance these key benefits. At the Council 400 meeting, Comptroller Scanlon fielded members' questions and fully committed to continue this important relationship with CSEA.



## McCusker Scholarship is Open!

February is McCusker month here at CSEA and the 2023 McCusker Scholarship Application is officially live on our website CSEA-CT.com under "Union Resources" and "McCusker" (while you're visiting our website to download the application for your child or grandchild, take a look around our new website!).

Complete applications must be received by CSEA no later than April 28th. This is a hard deadline. Completed applications along with all accompanying materials must be received

before 4:30PM on April 28th. Incomplete applications will not be considered.

Throughout the 62 year history of the Bernard McCusker Memorial Scholarship, CSEA has awarded over 1,000 scholarships totaling over \$1,000,000.00! We give great thanks to all the CSEA councils, chapters and individuals that have contributed over the years and are excited to award dozens more this year.

Haven't had a chance to donate yet? We are always pleased to accept your donation at any time. Be sure to mail your check:

Payable to the "McCusker Memorial Scholarship Fund" to:  
CSEA/SEIU Local 2001, 760 Capitol Ave. Hartford, CT 06106  
Attention - Valeria Lattarulo

## 2023 Legislative Update from CSEA Political Director, Daniel I. Medress

The 2023 Legislative Session is in full swing with public hearings expected to start this week. CSEA's full legislative agenda is available on our website at CSEA-CT.com and we encourage you to follow along throughout the session to see what ideas become concepts, what concepts become bills, and what bills become law.

CSEA members are fighting to pass bills that will protect the services we provide and improve funding for the work we do. As public employees, we know what a huge impact the General Assembly has on our careers and lives. That's why members from throughout our Local are joining together to make sure that legislation that respects and honors working people makes it to the Governor's desk.

However, before any bill is ready to be signed into law, it first has to make it through the committee process. There are 27 committees in the General Assembly, covering every facet of public life and

government operations. From the Appropriations Committee that has oversight of the state budget to the Education Committee that handles matters related to K through 12 schools, there is a committee for everything.

A lot of bills are introduced during a legislative session, and most of them will never make it out of a committee, must less be voted on in the chamber of the state Senate or state House. Public hearings are an important tool legislators, and the public, use to determine which pieces of legislation have worth and merit and should move forward, and which lack support from Connecticut residents. The public hearing portion of the legislative session will last throughout the month of February and into March and is the best time for your voice to be heard at the Capitol. All public hearings will be hybrid, and anyone can testify. Testifying in person or virtually is easy to do - and submitting written testimony is even easier! And, best of all, CSEA staff helps you through all of it.

General Assembly members, the press, and the public turn out to watch these public hearings, and the importance of testifying on behalf of our legislative agenda cannot be overstated. As the CSEA News goes

to print, only a few public hearings have been scheduled, but this will change over the next couple of days and weeks.

The Appropriations Committee has announced they will be holding hearings on the state budget from February 13 through February 24. This will follow Governor Ned Lamont's budget address on February 8 and his staff's presentation to the Appropriations Committee on February 9. During the Appropriations Committee's budget hearings, committee members hear from state agencies during the day, and from the public during the evening. Legislators take these hearings very seriously and they are a great opportunity to speak to them directly as they work to piece together a budget package.

CSEA members have a big and broad agenda this year, but already there is progress to report:

- As part of our work with the Recovery for All coalition to improve Connecticut's tax system and make it fairer for

*continue onto page 5*

Visit our union's website at: [CSEA-CT.com](http://CSEA-CT.com)

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## Meetings And News

The next Delegates Meeting will be held as a hybrid meeting on Thursday, February 16th at 10am at the CSEA Union Hall

Guest Speaker: Cheri Quickmire, Executive Director of Common Cause Connecticut

Chapter 401 (Hartford area):  
Thursday, March 2nd  
12:30 lunch & 1pm meeting  
CSEA Union Hall & via Zoom  
760 Capitol Ave., Hartford  
Patrice Peterson: (860) 416-0306

Chapter 402 (Danbury area):  
\*Meeting will be canceled if Danbury Public Schools are closed or delayed due to weather.  
Wednesday, February 8th - 10am  
Guest Speaker: Aetna Representative, Beth Horton  
United Methodist Church  
5 Clapboard Ridge Rd. Danbury  
Linda Albanese: (860) 354-6965

Chapter 403 (Norwich area):  
Tuesday, February 14th - 1:30pm  
Guest Speaker: Aetna Representative, Beth Horton  
Rose City Senior Center  
8 Mahan Drive., Norwich  
Carol Burgess: (860) 859-3641

Chapter 404 (Waterbury area):  
Tuesday, February 14th - 10am  
Guest Speaker: Cigna Representative  
Trinity Orthodox Church  
937 Chase Parkway, Waterbury  
John Quinn: (203) 804-0189

Chapter 405 (New Haven area):  
Thursday, February 9th - 10:30am  
Guest Speaker: Cigna Representative  
Hamden Government Center Bldg  
2750 Dixwell Ave, Hamden  
Ron Osokow: (203) 671-7685

Chapter 406 (Middletown area):  
Tuesday, February 14th - 1pm  
American Legion Post 75  
58 Bernie O'Rourke Dr., Middletown  
Joe Formica: (860) 347-4532

Chapter 407 (Bridgeport area):  
Wednesday, February 15th - 1pm  
Guest Speaker: Bernadette Conway  
St. Josephs of Stratford National Catholic Church  
1300 Stratford Rd., Stratford (on Rt. 113)  
Joan Matzonkai: (203) 751-0300

Chapter 408 (Willimantic area):  
Thursday, February 9th - 12:30pm  
Guest Speaker: Eastern Highlands Health District  
Mansfield Senior Center  
303 Maple Ave. Mansfield  
Doug Racicot: (860) 234-2537

Chapter 409 (State University Professors)  
Friday, February 17th - 10am  
Guest Speaker: David Blitz (CCSU)  
CSEA Union Hall & via Zoom  
760 Capitol Ave., Hartford  
Dave Walsh: (860) 684-4773

Chapter 410 (Windsor Locks area):  
Monday, February 13th - 1pm  
Guest Speakers: Aetna Representative  
Suffield Senior Center  
145 Bridge St., Suffield  
Amelia Smith: (860) 687-1848

Chapter 411 (Rocky Hill area):  
Thursday, March 16th - 12pm  
Guest Speakers: Aetna & Cigna Representatives  
CSEA Union Hall  
760 Capitol Ave., Hartford  
Subby Puglisi: (860) 836-4009

Chapter 412 (Putnam area):  
Tuesday, February 21st - 1:30pm  
Putnam Town Hall  
200 School St., Putnam  
Don Gladding: (860) 933-9998

Chapter 414 (Torrington area):  
Monday, February 20th - 10am  
Guest Speaker: Beth Horton, Aetna Representative  
Five Points Art Center  
855 University Dr, Torrington, CT 06790  
Karen Pineman: (860) 354-6727

Chapter 415 (Manchester area):  
Monday, February 27th - 1pm  
Manchester Elks Lodge  
30 Bissell St., Manchester, CT  
Stuart Clark: (860) 205-0657 (c)  
(860) 454-4818 (h)

Chapter 416 (New London area):  
Tuesday, February 14th - 12pm  
Guest Speaker: Representative Cathy Osten  
Waterford Public Library  
49 Rope Ferry Road, Waterford, CT  
John Knaff (860) 857-4244

Chapter 417 (Plainville area):  
Wednesday, March 8th - 1pm  
Guest Speaker: Aetna Representative  
Plainville Public Library - Auditorium  
56 East Main St., Plainville  
Mark Kirschner: (860) 882-2717

Chapter 418 (Community College Retirees):  
Tuesday, February 7th - 10am  
Guest Speaker: Aetna Representative  
4C's Union Hall - 907 Wethersfield Ave, Hartford  
Bill Searle (860) 745-3692

Out of State Meetings - Speakers will include:  
Kevin Sullivan CSEA Retiree Organizer  
Representatives from Aetna & Cigna

Chapter 421 (Daytona, Florida Area)  
\*Annual Meeting & Luncheon  
Wednesday, February 8th, 2023  
11:30 Social - 12pm Luncheon  
Halifax Plantation Golf Club  
3400 Clubhouse Dr, Ormond Beach, FL 32174  
Cost: \$33 for members and \$41 for guests  
Write meal choices in memo section of check make checks payable to "CSEA Chapter 421" send checks to John Veray, 107 White Ibis Ct., Daytona Beach, FL 32119  
Meal Choice: Chicken Frittata, Atlantic Cod, or Beef Burgundy. Includes: salad, rolls and butter, garlic red bliss potatoes, vegetables  
Strawberry layer cake, coffee and tea included  
RSVP by Friday, January 27th to:  
Pat Albert (386) 615-6805

Chapter 422 (Ocala, Florida Area)  
\*Annual Meeting & Luncheon  
Wednesday, February 1st at 11:30am  
Francesco's Ristorante  
16770 South Highway, Suite 608  
Summerfield, FL 34491  
Meal Choice: Chicken Parm., Sirloin Tips, Whitefish Piccata, Eggplant Rollatini  
Includes: Salad, Bread, Dessert, Coffee/tea  
Cost: \$17.50 Members & \$22.50 Non-members  
Checks payable to "CSEA Chapter 422"

Send checks along with meal choice to:  
Hilda Spotts, 513 Fairways Circle Unit A  
Ocala, FL 34472  
Door Prizes!  
Frank Berlinski (860) 604-7688

Chapter 423 (Boca Raton, Florida Area)  
\*Annual Meeting & Luncheon  
Monday, February 13th, 2023 at 12pm  
Renzo's Cafe and Pizzeria  
6900 N Federal Hwy, Boca Raton, FL 33487  
Ron Herzig (561) 994-6428

Chapter 424 (Sarasota, Florida Area)  
\*Annual Meeting & Informational Breakfast  
Monday, February 6th, 2023 at 9am  
Courtyard Marriott  
8305 Tourist Center Dr., Sarasota  
Breakfast Buffet Cost: \$20 per person  
RSVP by February 1, 2023  
Checks made out to "CSEA Chapter 424"  
Should be mailed to: Robert Mackiewicz  
414 Pelican Moorings, Venice, FL 34285  
Questions? Contact Bob: (941) 497-2370

Chapter 425 (Clearwater, Florida Area)  
\*Annual Meeting & Luncheon  
Friday, February 3rd at 11am  
Grillsmith - Countryside  
2539 Countryside Blvd., Clearwater, FL  
Menu options: Chicken Marsala, Oak Barrel Salmon, Center-Cut Sirloin, or Margherita Pasta. Includes salad, dessert, coffee, tea and soda  
Cost: \$25 for members and guests  
Checks made payable to: "CSEA Chapter 425"  
Sent to: Richard LeVine  
1020 South Tennessee Ave  
Lakeland, FL 33803  
RSVP by January 27th  
Questions? Kevin Sullivan (860) 951-6614 ext. 118

Chapter 426 (Ft. Myers, Florida Area)  
\*Annual Meeting & Luncheon  
Wednesday, February 15th at 11:30am  
KJ's Steakhouse  
10950 S Cleveland Ave, Fort Myers, FL 33907  
Buffet with many choices including vegetarian options  
Cost is \$20 for members and guests  
Checks to payable to "CSEA Chapter 426"  
Should be sent to Ray McCabe,  
2312 North West 5th St., Cape Coral, FL 33993  
Questions? Deb Gould (203) 605-6690

Chapter 427 (Vero Beach, Florida Area)  
\*Annual Meeting & Luncheon  
Friday, February 10th at 11am  
Fort Pierce Elks Lodge 1520  
608 S 5th St., Fort Pierce, FL 34950  
Cost per person is \$25  
Checks should be made payable to "CSEA Chapter 427" and mailed to:  
Martha Jurek  
4065 Rhonda Ct.  
Merritt Island, FL 32952  
Questions? Call Martha (860) 558-8172

Chapter 431 (Carolinas Chapter)  
\*Annual Meeting & Luncheon  
Tuesday, March 14th at 11am  
Golden Corral  
868 Oak Forest Ln, Myrtle Beach, SC 29577  
Buffet Cost: \$10 per person  
Checks made out to "CSEA Chapter 431"  
Should be mailed to: Virginia Nolan  
3204 S. Memorial Ave., Nags Head, NC 27959  
Questions? Call John Yopp (203) 507-1022



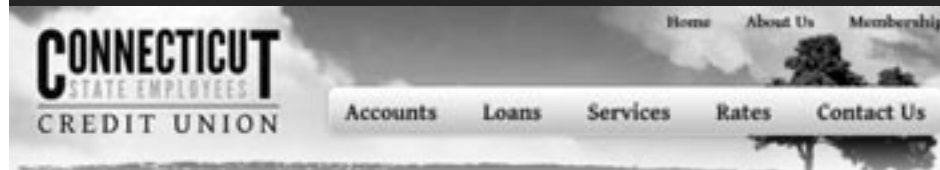


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**Closed Lincoln's Birthday — Monday, Feb 13**  
**Closed Washington's Birthday — Monday, Feb 20**

**Dividend Rates - Fourth Quarter 2022**

	Dividend Rate	Annual Percentage Yield
REGULAR SHARES	2.00%	2.02%
SHARE DRAFTS (Checking)	0.75%	0.75%
CLUB ACCOUNTS	1.25%	1.26%

Minimum opening balance \$25.00. The annual percentage yield is accurate as of the last dividend declaration date. Rate may change after the account is opened. Fees or other conditions may reduce the earnings on the account.

**7 Full Service Offices To Serve You**

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<b>MIDDLETOWN</b> Connecticut Valley Hospital P.O. Box 2485 Middletown, CT 06457 (860) 347-0479	<b>STORRS</b> 1244 Storrs Rd. Storrs, CT 06268 (860) 429-9306	<b>SOUTHBURY</b> Southbury Training School P.O. Box 644 Southbury, CT 06488 (203) 267-7610
		<b>NEWINGTON</b> O'Neil Plaza 2434 Berlin Turnpike Newington, CT 06111 (860) 667-7668

Hours: Main Office: Mon-Fri, 9am-4pm Branches: Mon-Fri, 9:30am-4pm  
Drive-Up Teller (Hartford Only): Mon-Fri, 8:30am-4pm; Paydays Open Until 5pm

**Gone too Soon: CSEA Members Who Have Passed On**

The Office of the State Comptroller has provided CSEA with the following members that have recently passed away. Our condolences are with their friends, family and loved ones.

- |                    |                    |                       |
|--------------------|--------------------|-----------------------|
| Altieri, James     | Isabell, Rosie     | Shpak, Antoinette     |
| Arbelaez, Susan    | Kimball, David     | Spiegel, Esther       |
| Avery, David       | Logan, Lois Ann    | Tharpe, Gladys        |
| Bassett, Patricia  | Marquis, Tracey    | Todd, Virginia        |
| Beaulieu, Michael  | Martin, Kathleen   | Tolento, William      |
| Bell, David        | Mccaw, Margaret    | Washington, Elizabeth |
| Berman, John       | Mckeever, Barbara  | Weid, Lee             |
| Bourque, Norman    | Meister, Jack      |                       |
| Caswell, Hale      | Orlowski, Mark     |                       |
| Connelly, Joyce    | Paradise, Laurel   |                       |
| Connery, David     | Payton, Elizabeth  |                       |
| Corbidge, Robert   | Pernaselli, Joseph |                       |
| Craddock, Roy      | Perrone, Richard   |                       |
| Crowell, Glen      | Petteway, Sallie   |                       |
| Dorsey, Jean       | Pierce, Nancy      |                       |
| Douglas, Fred      | Portelance, Joseph |                       |
| Doyon, Real        | Scarfo, Frank      |                       |
| Floyd, Steven      | Scott, Dennis      |                       |
| Haddock, Catherine | Selvidio, Dorothy  |                       |
| Holland, John      | Sheehan, Richard   |                       |



**CSEA NEWS**  
*The Voice of Connecticut's Public Service Employees & Retirees*  
USPS # 224-100 ISSN # 0273-6055  
Published Monthly by:  
CONNECTICUT STATE EMPLOYEE ASSOCIATION  
Local 2001, Service Employees International Union, CTW/CLC

Travis Woodward .....President  
Beverly Lee .....Secretary/Treasurer  
David Glidden .....Executive Director  
Drew E. Stoner .....Communication Specialist  
Jason P. Webster .....Graphic/ Technical Assistance

INSERTION DEADLINE: 1st of prior month.  
MAILING ADDRESS: CSEA/SEIU Local 2001, 760 Capitol Avenue, Hartford, CT 06106;  
PHONES: (860) 951-6614, toll-free: (800) 894-9479, FAX: (860) 951-3526; INTERNET:  
[www.csea-ct.com](http://www.csea-ct.com).

"CSEA NEWS" (USPS 224-100, ISSN 0273-6055) is published monthly for \$2.80 per year members, \$5.00 per year non-members, by CSEA/SEIU Local 2001, 760 Capitol Ave., Hartford, CT 06106-1263. Periodicals postage paid at Hartford, CT. Postmaster: Send address changes to "CSEA NEWS," 760 Capitol Ave., Hartford, CT 06106-1263.

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# CSEA Joins Recovery For All to Launch 'Equity Agenda'

organizations united in the Recovery for All

As the legislature and Governor Lamont prepared to write the most important moral document in Connecticut – the state budget – over one hundred people from all walks of life came to the Capitol and demanded that the wealthiest state in the country invest in racial, economic, and gender equity. Community, faith and labor

coalition joined legislators to release the Equity Agenda—a comprehensive set of investment and revenue policies that will help every family in Connecticut have what they need to live a good life. You can review the full Equity Agenda on the Recovery For All website at [recoveryforallct.com](http://recoveryforallct.com)



ABOVE: About 150 people crowded the Hall of Flags, beneath the Governor's Office, to demand investment in public services and bold tax reforms to lift the burden off of the middle class and working poor.



ABOVE: Council 400 members Bill Buhler (left) and Dave Walsh (right) were excited to listen to the speakers at the press conference.

# CT SEIU State Council Gets a New Executive Director!

The end of 2022 also marked the retirement of Rick Melita, Executive Director of the SEIU State Council and former Political Director for CSEA. We wish Rick the best in his retirement and thank him for all of his decades of service to the working families of Connecticut!

Kooper Caraway has since stepped into the role of Executive Director and our staff and leaders are already excited to work with him in these coming months. Kooper comes from a working class family in Texas. His mother was a retail worker and his father worked in the trucking industry. Many of his cousins and his grandfather were union steelworkers in Lonestar, TX.

He began organizing in High School. When immigration agents, under the direction of the Bush Administration, set up camp and began raiding peoples' homes in the small town of Mt. Pleasant, TX Kooper Caraway, then a high school junior, organized a series of actions and demonstrations until the federal agents packed up and left town. He then went to work in Dallas as part of

the labor movement, first as a union warehouse worker with the Teamsters union. As an organizer with Jobs with Justice he was successful at bridging the community-labor gap. He has since served as a union rep for the American

Federation of Teachers and an Organizer for the United Food and Commercial Workers Union.

In 2017 he relocated to South Dakota to serve as lead organizer for AFSCME

Council 65 and on Jan 3rd 2018 he was elected President of the Sioux Falls AFL-CIO. At 27, he became the Youngest CLC President in the nation.

From 2017-2020 he led the Sioux Falls AFL-CIO through rebuilding and was able to increase participation, affiliation, and member engagement. In September 2020 he was

# Council 400 Member Bikes the East Coast

Council 400 member, John Harmon, has finally completed his long-running tour down the east coast of the United States. Over the last year and a half, in 4-8 day sections, John rode his trike from Bath, Maine, to Key Biscayne, Florida, staying as close to the water as possible. John frequently rides his famous trike to actions all around Connecticut supporting the labor movement! Next time you see him riding around, be sure to give him a wave!



ABOVE: John Harmon poses on his famous trike in Florida.



ABOVE: Council 400 member Tom Connolly (left) poses with our brother and sister from the 4C's union.



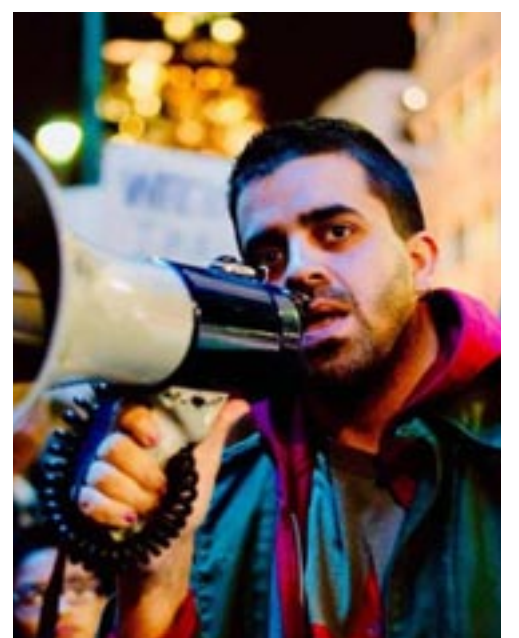
ABOVE: Council 400 member Win Heimer (left) poses with Communications Director Drew Stoner (right) and her son, Merrick (middle).

elected President of the South Dakota Federation of Labor. At 29 years old he became the youngest state labor federation president in the nation.

Today he is proud to serve as the youngest SEIU State Council Executive Director in the nation and is committed to bringing justice and prosperity to the members and families of CSEA and the entire SEIU State Council.



ABOVE: Rick Melita at the 2018 CSEA SEIU Local 2001 Convention.



ABOVE: Kooper Caraway is the new Executive Director of the SEIU State Council for Connecticut.



## Para Council Prepares for Legislative Fight

Over the past several sessions of the Connecticut General Assembly, CSEA members have made important progress for paraeducators and the students we serve. But we all know that there is much more work to be done. This year, we are fighting for transformative legislation that will bring critical improvement to the work we do, and the pay and benefits we receive.

During the 2021 and 2022 legislative sessions, we passed bills that improved the School Paraeducator Advisory Council, put in place a system for paraeducator career development, and one that allows paras to attend PPT meetings and view IEPs. This was just a start, and with all of us working together, we can deliver even more for our members during the 2023 legislative session.

This year, CSEA, other unions representing paras, and the School Paraeducator Advisory Council have proposed legislation that will make

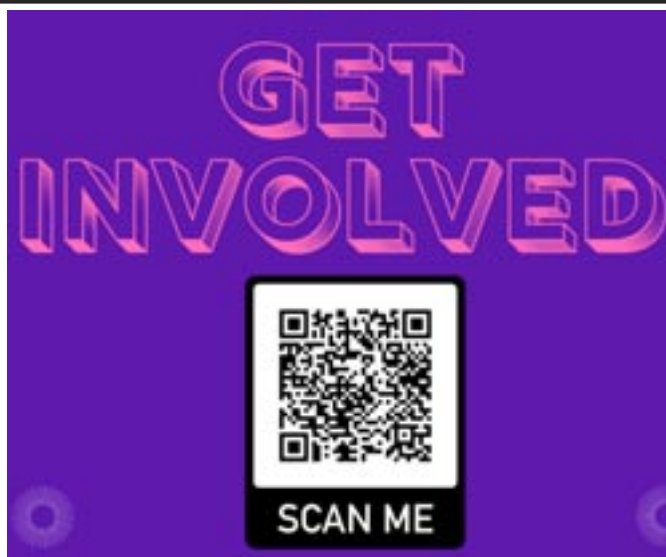
improvements to our pay, healthcare, and retirement benefits, as well as more fully integrate paras into the PPT and IEP

process.

Final legislative language is still being drafted, but the bill will be raised in the Education Committee and will be the subject of a public hearing. We do not have a public hearing date yet, but I'll share it with you as soon as we do. Telling your story at a public hearing is easy, fun, and incredibly effective. CSEA staff will help you with every phase of your testimony. You can submit written testimony, testify via Zoom, or come up to the Legislative Office Building in Hartford to speak in person. Whatever works best for you! **Scan the QR code to the right to sign up to get involved!**

Together, let's make this legislative session the Year of the Paraeducator!

- Cynthia Ross-Zweig  
Paraeducator, New Fairfield  
President, Paraeducator Council



ABOVE: Cynthia Ross-Zweig (right) is presented the Mike Molinaro Award for Collective Action by CSEA President, Travis Woodward (left).

## January Press Round Up MLK Day, Staff Shortages & Danbury Victory!

This month, CSEA members were featured in articles discussing the pension benefit ruling for Danbury Tutors, staff shortages in DOT and the meaning of Martin Luther King Jr. Day.

Right before the January paper went to print, we were alerted to a huge victory in Danbury. Back in November of 2020, Danbury Tutors, represented by CSEA SEIU Local 2001, joined together with approximately 100 supporters to hold a press conference regarding the filing of a Motion for a Declarative Judgment against the City of Danbury. As full time employees, CSEA tutors' ask to the court was simple: confirm what is already clear in the Town's Pension Ordinance. Specifically that the tutors, like all other Board of Education employees, are entitled to a pension benefit.

We learned that the judge granted our motion for summary judgment and denied the City of Danbury's Motion. The judge ruled that the Danbury tutors were not obligated to bargain for the pension

benefit and that, as a matter of law, the Tutors employed by the BOE are entitled to a Declaratory Judgment saying they qualify for a pension under the terms of the pension plan set forth in the City Charter.

This huge union win comes after years of members fighting for their voice to be heard and will no doubt require further work to ensure the City of Danbury appropriately follows through with this ruling. They have already started the process to reargue the case and may still try to appeal the decision. We will continue to update members as we closely watch this case.

The *Danbury News Times* covered this huge win in an article on January 19th titled "Danbury school tutors union declares 'huge victory' in legal battle to earn pension benefits". Barbara Sabo, a Danbury Tutor and plaintiff in the case was quoted, "Sabo, a 32-year Danbury resident who worked as a Danbury public school tutor for 20 years, said tutors provide critical services to the school district and deserve to "retire in dignity with (a) modest pension benefit."

"There are about 1,500 special education students in

Danbury, each with their own special qualities and learning styles," she said in a statement. "Without tutors, many of these students would be outplaced to very expensive out of district schools and more certified teachers would be needed to assist with their education."

Travis Woodward, CSEA President, was also interviewed by Keith Phaneuf of the *CT Mirror* about staffing shortages for engineers in DOT in an article posted on January 17th titled "Even with gas tax holiday, CT's transportation coffers are flush". Woodward discussed the importance of fully staffing DOT, and the current difficulties they are facing to fill critical vacancies, "It's a nationwide competition to get these young professionals out of college," said Travis Woodward, president of CSEA-SEIU Local 2001 and a supervising engineer at the DOT. "Other states are eating our lunch."

"The Department of Administrative Services, which oversees most agency hiring across the Executive Branch, also needs to reform its

review processes, which have become too cumbersome, Woodward said, adding it normally took one month to hire an engineer and now can take three. They know there's an issue, but nobody knows how to circumvent it, he added."

Finally, Tom Connolly, Council 400 member, submitted a letter to the editor to the *CT Mirror* ahead of MLK Jr. Day. His opinion was posted on January 13th, titled "Dr. King had more than a dream. He had a program in mind." In this piece, Connolly implores readers to do more, "He directs us to act. Evil must be attacked by a counteracting persistence, by the day-to-day assault of the battering rams of justice." The text includes specific actions that can be taken in the areas of politics, education, housing and more."

## Legislative Update

continued from page 1

working people, two bills have been introduced - Senate Bill 351: AN ACT CONCERNING THE RESTRUCTURING OF CERTAIN TAXES AND TAX EQUITY and House Bill 5673: AN ACT CONCERNING THE REFORMATION OF CERTAIN TAXES AND TAX EQUITY. Simply put, these bills will require the very wealthy to pay a little more in taxes while lowering the tax burden for working people.

- A bill improving pay, benefits, and working conditions for paraeducators has been raised as a concept in the Education Committee. Soon, that concept will be turned into legislation, given a bill number, and be scheduled for public hearing; and  
- Working with our allies in other municipal and board of education unions, we are proposing

legislation that will provide those workers with pandemic pay bonus; like the ones being given to private sector workers as a result of state law and state employees through negotiation and arbitration.

As you can see on the CSEA legislative agenda, from expanding paid sick days to improving the work of the State Contracting Standards Board to making it easier to vote early or by mail to much more, there are a number of other issues on which we are focused. Please make sure you are signed up for CSEA emails to make sure you get the latest news and updates as more of our legislative agenda moves forward and as additional public hearings get scheduled.



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## Pandemic Pay Update for Private, State & Muni/BOE Sector

As we have previously reported, the arbitration hearing on pandemic pay between the State and SEBAC has wrapped up. Both parties are now working on filing their briefs before the arbitrator will make a ruling, at which point we will update members immediately on the decision. In the meantime, please keep an eye on the CSEA website (CSEA-CT.com).

For private sector members (and family

members of our public sector membership!), the state started issuing pandemic bonus payments on Feb. 1 to more than 150,000 essential workers in the private sector. The majority of accepted applicants will see the payments directly deposited into their bank account, but about 35,000 workers — whose electronic account information the state doesn't have on file — will be mailed paper checks in five to

six weeks. CSEA members are fighting to expand Connecticut's pandemic pay program to include public sector workers, specifically for people working for municipalities and boards of education. These essential workers, along with all others who are publicly employed, were excluded from the current program. Throughout the legislative session be on the lookout for more information on how you can get involved in these efforts.

care activities.

Tell Aetna you've completed the activity either online or by phone. They will just need a few

details, such as the date of the visit and the clinic name.

Choose a gift card from select merchants.

### Meals at Home

You can get a week of healthy, precooked meals delivered to your home after an inpatient hospital stay. This includes two meals per day for one week (14 total meals). These meals let you focus on recuperating while getting good nutrition and are offered at no cost to you.

Each meal includes a chef-inspired entrée, such as pasta, stews and salads. They also feature fruit, vegetables and desserts. The menu is developed by registered dietitians, so all meals are low in sodium, fat, cholesterol and sugar, and high in vitamins and minerals. All meals are easily prepared, shelf-stable and frozen.

After you're discharged from an inpatient hospital stay, GA Foods will call you. On the call, they'll tell you about your meal benefit and discuss delivery time frames. The meals will be delivered to your home at no cost.

### Ask a Nurse 24/7

It's always the right time to get your health questions answered. Talk to one of Aetna's nurses 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Sometimes you need a quick answer to a health question. Maybe it can't wait until you see your doctor. Let your fingers do the walking and get help from a nurse by calling 1-800-556-1555 anytime.

Some of the issues you may want to talk to a registered nurse about include; deciding whether to visit a doctor or urgent care center, help understanding your symptoms, or learning about treatment options and medical procedures.

## 2022-2023 P3B Sabbatical Application

The deadline for the 2022-2023 P3B Sabbatical Application is February 24th. Applications have been sent out to members, but if you did not receive the email or if you have any questions, please contact your Union Steward or

email Joanna James at JJames@csea760.com. Sabbaticals are provided per the P3B Collective Bargaining Agreement -- you can read the language under Article 27.

## P3B Sabbatical Application

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Of course, if you need emergency care, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency room immediately.

It is important to note that staff on the nurse call line cannot diagnose, prescribe or give medical advice. You should call your doctor with any questions or concerns about your health.

### Free COVID Tests

Medicare has a new initiative that will cover up to eight over-the-counter COVID-19 tests each calendar month, until the COVID-19 public health emergency ends, at no cost to you.

Anyone who is enrolled in a Medicare Advantage plan with Part B coverage is eligible as long as the pharmacy is participating in the Medicare COVID-19 Over-the-Counter (OTC) tests initiative. Medicare won't cover over-the-counter COVID-19 tests if you only have Medicare Part A coverage.

If you are enrolled in the State of Connecticut Aetna Medicare Advantage plan, the tests covered under this initiative will be covered outside of your existing plan's coverage, meaning you must provide your red, white and blue original Medicare Card.

A short list of participating pharmacies include; Big Y, Costco, CVS, Kroegers, Rite Aid, Stop and Shop, Walgreens, Walmart, and Wegmans. This list does not include many other pharmacies that participate in the program.

Call 1-800-MEDICARE (1-800-633-4227). to find access to free tests. TTY users can call 1-877-486-2048.

Please check with your pharmacy or healthcare provider to see if they are participating and will bill Medicare on your behalf.

## Council 400: Take advantage of all that the new Aetna plan has to offer

For retired state employees age 65 and over, Aetna is the new healthcare carrier as of January 1, 2023. It is important to remember that coverage and benefits have remained the same - it is only the insurance carrier that has changed. The transition from UnitedHealthcare to Aetna has been going well so far and now that the plan is up and running, we wanted to highlight some of the extra benefits you may not have been aware of before.

### Transportation to your Medical Appointments

Your Aetna Medicare Advantage PPO plan includes non-emergency transportation to your appointments and back home again. Aetna uses a company called Access2Care who will provide up to 24 one-way trips, up to 60 miles per trip. If you need a ride to and from your doctor's office, you'll use 2 of your 24.

To schedule your ride, call 1-855-814-1699, Monday to Friday, 8 AM to 9 PM CT. You can also reserve a ride or get more details at Access2Care.net. You must schedule trips at least 48 hours in advance. You can schedule trips up to 30 days in advance.

### Aetna Healthy Rewards

Aetna provides you with an opportunity to earn gift cards through their member rewards program for completing important health care activities such as annual exams, flu shots and more. To enroll in this program you can call Aetna at 1-855-648-0391, Monday to Friday, 8 AM to 9 PM ET. Once you enroll, there are three easy steps to earn rewards.

Complete your recommended health

## Physical Therapy Issues With Transition to Aetna Plan Resolved

Since the transition for retirees of Medicare age to the Aetna Medicare Advantage Plan on January 1st of this year, our members contacted us that their authorizations for physical therapy were not carried over as they should have.

We had all been told that all authorizations would roll over from United Healthcare to Aetna. But for some of our members that had pre-authorized physical therapy sessions for their treatment, their authorizations didn't roll over to the Aetna plan, and they were told they only had limited visits authorized.

We were able to take the information our retired members reported to us to contact the State of CT and Aetna and bring the issue to their attention to resolve it. We have received confirmation that previous authorizations for physical therapy will be now carried over.

For those that were told they were limited to six physical therapy appointments,

you do not need to do anything. Aetna is already in the process of updating their system to allow for claims to be processed correctly. While they update their claims system to ensure this fix is put in place, they are also reaching out to all utilized physical therapists to notify them of this update. The one thing to note is that prior authorization is the responsibility of the provider, not the member, and does not typically involve direct communication with the member. You should not have to do anything more at this point.

If you received a letter stating you have partial denial for physical therapy and are only authorized for a limited amount of visits, you should just ignore that letter. We were able to resolve this issue quickly and fairly because of CSEA members sticking together and working as a team to ensure your benefits and rights are protected!

## Part B Reimbursement for State Retirees

The standard premium rate for Medicare Part B is \$164.90 per month for 2023.

Most people have now received their statement from Social Security noting the personal premium amount. If you haven't you may want to call Social Security or visit their website: <https://www.ssa.gov/>

### What do you do next?

If you are already receiving reimbursement and you receive a notice that your premium will be \$164.90 for your Part B, you don't have to do anything!

If you receive notice from Social Security that your premium is higher than \$164.90, and/or you will be paying an additional amount for Part D, you will need to report the information to update your monthly reimbursement in your pension. This year, you will need to send the information to Aetna, who is now taking over processing the Part B reimbursement information. Do not send information to United-Healthcare! There are several ways you can report this information. Make a copy of your SS statement showing the amount you will be paying, and mark your state employee ID number above your name. Aetna is also asking for your Medicare ID number to speed up processing. For your spouse, include your name, Medicare ID number and your state employee ID number on the copy. All information must be submitted to Aetna, no later than February 28, 2023. You may submit by either:

### MAIL TO:

Aetna, Inc.  
PO Box 7083  
London, KY 40742

### EMAIL TO:

[medicareenrollmenttransactions@aetna.com](mailto:medicareenrollmenttransactions@aetna.com)

### FAX TO:

1-855-481-3124

If you send by mail they are stating DO NOT SEND CERTIFIED. If you are able to, it's recommended that you email your information. You will receive a confirmation of receipt of your email.

**Make sure to send this information by the deadline of February 28, 2023** for it to be retroactive to the beginning of this year. Any updates submitted after February 28, 2023 will only be prospective from the date of receipt by Aetna.

### Why Might You Be Charged a Different Rate?

If your Medicare premiums are something other than \$164.90 per month for 2023 it may be because:

You have higher annual earnings; you will be charged a Medicare Parts B and Part D Income Related Monthly Adjustment Amount (IRMAA). Those retired prior to August 1, 2022 are eligible for reimbursement of this total monthly rate. Those retired on or After August 1, 2022 are eligible for reimbursement of 50% of the additional monthly rate. Your premium may be less than \$164.90 due to the "hold harmless" provision that limits Medicare premiums if the increase would exceed the amount of the member's cost of living adjustment from Social Security. Please note, if it is determined mid-year that your rate is less than \$164.90 any amounts over refunded will be recovered by the State of CT.

**Important - all updates must be submitted no later than February 28, 2023 for full reimbursement.**

## Accelerated Tax Break for Retirees in Connecticut

CSEA has long understood that many of our retirees in Connecticut are on a tight budget—and with the increased cost of living, handling expenses while aging can be difficult. During the 2018 legislative session, CSEA advocated for a bill aimed at making that tight budget a little easier to deal with.

The bill became effective in 2019, and increased the threshold for Social Security income exemptions as well as implemented a new exemption for State of Connecticut residents who receive a State of Connecticut pension, starting at 14% and increasing progressively until it reaches 100% in 2025.

During the last legislative session, CSEA pushed for a new bill (§ 414 —

PENSION AND ANNUITY TAX EXEMPTION ACCELERATION) to speed up the process. Under the new bill, pension and annuity income is fully tax exempt starting with the 2022 tax year.

By law, taxpayers are eligible for this exemption only if their federal AGI is below (1) \$75,000 for single filers, married people filing separately, or heads of households and (2) \$100,000 for married people filing jointly. If your Federal AGI is at or above this amount (either as a single or joint filer) you will not be eligible for any exemption. The legislation also increases the threshold for 100% exemption for income taxes on Social Security from \$50,000 to \$75,000 for singles and \$60,000 to \$100,000 for couples.

Part of CSEA's Legislative Agenda for this session is to remove the threshold so that ALL retirees, no matter their income, will be exempt from any taxes on their retirement income.

## Important numbers to have on hand:

Retirement Division Payroll: 860-702-3528

Retirement Division Life Insurance: 860-702-3537

Retirement Division Health Insurance: 860-702-3533

Anthem Blue Cross Blue Shield: 1-800-922-2232

CSEA Retiree Organizer, Kevin Sullivan:  
860-951-6614 x118

Aetna Customer Service: 1-855-648-0391

Caremark: 1-800-318-2572

Cigna: 1-800-244-6224

HEP Care Management Solutions: 1-877-687-1448 or visit them at their portal:

<https://www.connect2yourhealth.com/ParticipantPortal/Default.aspx>



## Damar Hamlin & The Importance of Unions

Football fans everywhere were rocked when we all watched Damar Hamlin go into cardiac arrest on the field during the Buffalo Bills and Cincinnati Bengals game on January 2nd. It was only in the days later that football fans learned that it was not the league, the coaches, referees nor NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell that called for the game not to continue, it was the players union that did. The N.F.L. Players Association stepped up in the moments following Hamlin's medical emergency and did what unions do best - protect their members. When the employer,

Roger Goodell, called for players to warm up and prepare to re-start, the union stepped in and demanded a stoppage of play. The union has also been an active advocate in concussion protocols and other health policies that protect these workers.

Hamlin has since been discharged from the hospital and we all continue to wish him a full and speedy recovery, and a lifetime of union membership.



ABOVE: Buffalo Bills Safety, Damar Hamlin, suffered a heart attack on the field, bringing attention to the need for all workers to have a union to fight for their safety in the workplace.

## Go Green!

### Opt-In to our Digital CSEA News

Did you know that the average person in the US uses more than 700 pounds of paper per year? Or that despite global digitalization, paper usage has actually grown 126% in the last 20 years in the US?

The CSEA News has been an integral part of our communications program for decades, but it is 2023 and we have a host of resources to reduce our carbon footprint and "Go Green." The most effective way for our members to "Go Green" is to request that the CSEA News be sent digitally rather than a hardcopy in the mail!

"Going Green" not only helps decrease the amount of paper waste in our landfills, but it also reduces ink waste and the carbon emissions from delivery. Many of our CSEA members have been interested in decreasing their carbon footprint and opting into the

digital E-Newsletter is a great way to take a small step towards a greener future! Every month you will receive this digital paper in your email inbox - all of the same information, just a lot less waste! To opt into the Go Green E-Newsletter, simply visit [bit.ly/GoGreenCSEA](https://bit.ly/GoGreenCSEA) and fill out the form.

To make your communications experience even easier, we've launched a NEW WEBSITE! Visit [CSEA-CT.com](https://CSEA-CT.com) or [SEIU2001.org](https://SEIU2001.org) and let us know what you think - give us feedback on what you like, don't like and what you want improved by visiting [bit.ly/CSEA-WebsiteInput](https://bit.ly/CSEA-WebsiteInput) (case sensitive).

If CSEA has your email address, then you've already received this survey in your inbox, but if we don't then it is also a good opportunity for you to update your contact information by visiting [bit.ly/UpdateCSEA](https://bit.ly/UpdateCSEA) (case sensitive).

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