



ABOVE: CSEA President Travis Woodward addresses over 100 members at one of the two rallies CSEA led during the 2023 Legislative Session.

SINE DIE! Legislative Session Wraps up What We've Learned So Far

By: Daniel I. Medress, Political Education Director

While CSEA and the rest of our allies in SEBAC, Recovery for All, and the SEIU State Council, faced some challenges that will re-

quire work and lobbying in future General Assembly sessions, after a busy few months, the 2023 Legislative Session ended at the stroke of midnight on Wednesday,

June 7th, with multiple legislative wins for CSEA members.

Recovery for All Legislative Proposals:

With Governor Lamont dead set against any tax increases on

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CSEA Continues Fight for Social Security! CSEA President Speaks at Press Conference with Congressional Representatives

On June 9th, CSEA President Travis Woodward participated in a press conference co-hosted by Congressman John Larson and Congresswoman Jahana Hayes in support of Social Security 2100. CSEA members, particularly those in Council 400, have been increasingly active around the protection and expansion of Social Security from sending letters and emails to hosting forums with all five congresspeople in Connecticut. Woodward delivered the following remarks:

"Our members are worried about the prospect of a 20% cut in their monthly benefit in just nine short years. For many of them, that would mean they can't afford their medication,

groceries or rent. "But it's not just our retirees who are concerned about Social Security, all of our members are worried - especially our youngest workers who are seeing their retirement date get pushed further and further off with the prospect of a diminished Social Security benefit. Connecticut is lucky though to have

Congressman Larson and Congresswoman Hayes who are working to extend the Trust Fund's solvency, all without increasing taxes on workers. But our federal legislators need our help if we are going to be successful.

"CSEA, and particularly our Council 400 Retirees, have been working hard to protect and expand Social

Security - we've sent letters and emails, we've made phone calls and we've engaged our out-of-state retirees in Florida, North and South Carolina and Massachusetts with both in-person and virtual meetings.

"Our retirees and our active employees will continue to be vocal allies for both Congressman Larson and Congresswoman Hayes as they continue our fight back in Washington D.C."



ABOVE: Travis Woodward speaks at a press conference with Congressman Larson (far left) and Congresswoman Jahana Hayes (second from the left).

Freedom Foundation Latest Scam: Fake Checks

The so-called 'Freedom' Foundation has brought their "Opt Out Today" scam to Connecticut under a false veneer of concern for working peoples' rights. Their latest attack on working people comes at a time when we are all struggling to make ends meet, they are shamelessly sending out very real looking checks for hundreds of dollars that are nothing but a scam - a classic 'Freedom' Foundation move.

Their Opt-Out scam features catch-phrases like, "Give yourself a raise!" and "leaving your union won't affect your pensions!" They tell us that revoking our membership does not affect our livelihoods; but here are some other things Freedom Foundation leaders have said:

"It makes little sense to promote a pay raise for state employees who are satisfied enough with their

jobs that 90% of them choose to remain employed by the state," Amber Gunn, Freedom Foundation Blog.

Here, the Freedom Foundation is openly stating that public employees like us do not need raises. They have also advocated for revoking pensions, stating:

"Everything should be on the table... states should consider replacing their defined-benefit plans with defined-contribution 401(k) plans," Bob Williams, founder of the Freedom' Foundation.

We of course know that union membership is key to union strength and workplace rights. Our recent raises are a timely example of contract wins and enforcement. Our union dues collectively provided the resources that made winning meaningful raises possible. Our dues also ensure that we en-

force the contractual provisions around the raises we won.

This is another reason why legislation that CSEA pushed for this year that would prevent member information from being FOIA'd, especially by special interests groups with nefarious goals, is so important. Next session we will be back ready to fight for these necessary protections, but in the meantime, if you get a scam check like the one on Page 4, be sure to alert your steward or staff representative and remember, when they come knockin' tell them no and let them know you are staying with your union!

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Visit our union's website at: CSEA-CT.com

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and NASHTU
Conferences



**C400 Staff Report -
End of Fiscal Year 2023
By Kevin Sullivan**

When it comes to making a lasting impact and championing the rights and well-being of workers, CSEA Council 400 has set a shining example as an exceptional retiree union. With a legacy built on unity, dedication, and advocacy, Council 400 continues to inspire and empower retirees to make a difference long after their active careers have ended. Let's take a moment to reflect on the remarkable achievements of this incredible retiree union over the past year.

Impressive Retiree Membership Increase: The union has successfully enrolled over 1,000 new retiree members, strengthening our ability to defend pensions, healthcare, and hold insurance providers like Aetna and Cigna accountable for retiree well-being.

Resolving Issues with the Aetna Medicare Advantage Plan: The transition to the Aetna Medicare Advantage Plan has presented challenges for our members, both significant and minor. However, thanks to our proactive members who have notified us of their issues, we have been able to effectively advocate for resolutions. Specifically, we have addressed concerns related to co-pays, prescription denials, as well as denials of physical therapy and medical tests. By leveraging our members' feed-

back, we have ensured that they receive the benefits outlined in their health plan as per the contractual requirements.

Legislative Victories: The union has led effective legislative actions, defeating bills that aimed to weaken public sector unions, recalculate pensions, and cap pension amounts for State of Connecticut Retirees. These wins safeguard retirees' benefits. We also fought to make sure that voting rights in Connecticut were expanded to make voting more accessible to all.

Active Retiree Chapter Engagement: CSEA Retiree Chapters held 194 meetings across 27 chapters along the East Coast, providing retirees with opportunities to come together and make collective decisions.

Revival of Social Activities Committee: Council 400 members have revived the Social Activities Committee, planning trips, vacations, and social outings for CSEA members, fostering community and camaraderie. Watch in the CSEA News and emails for the trips that are planned, and we hope you participate in them!

Strong Support for Political Action Committee: Many Council 400 members have chosen to contribute to the Political Action Committee (PAC) through automatic deductions from their pension checks. These funds strengthen the union's ability to defend members' benefits both in Hartford and in Washington.

**COUNCIL 400
PICNIC
(AUGUST 9TH 11AM)
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Solidarity with Coalition Partners: Council 400 members have supported the Recovery for All coalition, advocating for a financial recovery that benefits low-income families, the working class, and retirees on fixed incomes.

As the contract for negotiated pension and healthcare benefits expires in 2027, it's important to act now to ensure that no benefits are lost during the upcoming negotiations. Building a strong membership base and maintaining an active Political Action Committee (PAC) are key to this process. With a robust membership and an engaged PAC, the union will be well-positioned to protect members' hard-earned benefits.

CSEA Council 400 has exemplified what a strong retiree union can accomplish. Your outstanding achievements in advancing workers' rights, engaging communities, shaping legislation, and fostering lifelong learning, serve as an inspiration to all. Council 400's legacy of empowerment and unity will continue to resonate, leaving a lasting imprint on the labor movement and the lives of workers for generations to come. It has been a pleasure working with all of you and I know we are going to continue to make great strides.
Stronger Together!

A Note for State Retirees with Spouses:

The size of our membership is an important way that CSEA Council 400 demonstrates our power, our voice and our strength—and for 2023 we've set out to drastically increase our membership numbers ahead of upcoming contract negotiations and legislative threats. Spouses are a large part of our membership, and it's no secret why—they are affected by health insurance and pension benefit changes and are often slated for survivor benefits.

By becoming a member, your spouse will ensure they will continue to

receive the CSEA News and important notifications regarding the benefits you worked hard to secure if you were to pass away. They will also be eligible for SEIU Member Benefits like travel rewards and reduced auto and home insurance rates.

But most importantly, by becoming a member, they will help to increase our membership numbers so that CSEA Council 400 will have an even larger voice against our opponents who want to slash benefits—your benefits, their benefits.

If your spouse isn't yet a member, contact our Retiree Organizer, Kevin Sullivan at Ksullivan@csea760.com or 860-951-6614 x 118 to get them signed up!

Important numbers to have on hand:

Retirement Division Payroll: 860-702-3528

Aetna Customer Service: 1-855-648-0391

Retirement Division Life Insurance: 860-702-3537

Caremark: 1-800-318-2572

Retirement Division Health Insurance: 860-702-3533

Cigna: 1-800-244-6224

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

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

HEP Care Management Solutions: 1-877-687-1448 or visit them at their portal:
<https://www.connect2yourhealth.com/ParticipantPortal/Default.aspx>



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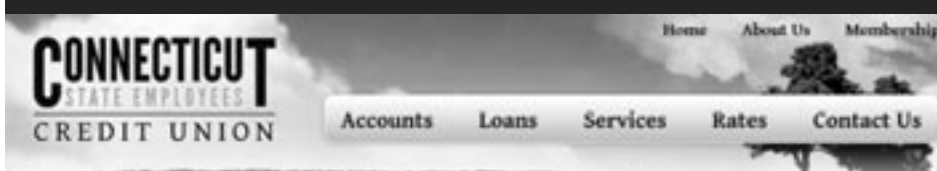


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Dividend Rates - Second Quarter 2023

	Dividend Rate	Annual Percentage Yield
REGULAR SHARES	2.50%	2.53%
SHARE DRAFTS (Checking)	1.25%	1.26%
CLUB ACCOUNTS	1.75%	1.77%

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.

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MIDDLETOWN 15 Ward Street Middletown, CT 06457 (860) 347-0479	STORRS 1244 Storrs Rd. Storrs, CT 06268 (860) 429-9306	SOUTHBURY Southbury Training School P.O. Box 644 Southbury, CT 06488 (203) 267-7610
		NEWINGTON O'Neil Plaza 2434 Berlin Turnpike Newington, CT 06111 (860) 667-7668

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 Drive-Up Teller (Hartford & Middletown): 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.

- | | |
|--------------------|----------------------|
| Affelder, Anne | Martin, Jane |
| Barteaux, Anna | Mcdonald, Geraldine |
| Blanchette, Ronald | Mcdonnell, Joyce |
| Burton, Laurie | Mcgrath, Doreen |
| Carpenter, Kenna | Mischak, Michael |
| Ceella, Anita | Moi, Margaret |
| Chartier, Joy | Moore, Barbara |
| Cherian, Jainamma | Murzin, Daniel |
| Cianci, Nicholas | O'neil, Sally |
| Collin, Maurice | Oconnell, Elizabeth |
| Cooper, Garnet | Pachera, Lucille |
| Czombos, Billy | Peloquin, Olga |
| Dalsky, Gail | Pierson, Melvin |
| Fein, Alan | Pomeroy, Joann |
| Ferris, Monique | Rinaldi, Dennis |
| Finizio, Victor | Ruggiero Jr, Anthony |
| Gagliardo, Frank | Rush, Jerome |
| Horvith, Allen | Schiffert, Barbara |
| Hospod, Stanley | Schroeder, Beverly |
| Iaconetti, Melissa | Spencer, Edwin |
| Kirko, Helen | Supple, Maureen |
| Lavery, Hope | Terezakis, Michael |
| Leary, Joy | Van Wilgen, Aart |
| Lombardi, Rocco | Walsh, Richard |
| Lopreiato, Domenic | Williams, Marguerite |
| Lucas, William | |
| Malmberg, Carole | |
| Markovitz, Donna | |



CSEA NEWS

*The Voice of Connecticut's
Public Service Employees & Retirees*

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

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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.

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P4 Members Celebrate Mid-Contract Win!

Office of the State Building Inspector & State Fire Marshal's Office

Nearly every public sector entity has been impacted by understaffing. In the state sector, the problem has intensified in the wake of the 2022 "Silver Tsunami" and the overall tightness of the labor market. In various settings, union leaders have been pressing employers to increase salaries and have been met with success – especially in areas where recruitment has been particularly difficult. Our most recent victory includes mid-contract paygrade increases for P4 members working in DAS's Office of the State Building Inspector (OSBI) and Office of the State Fire Marshal (OSFM). For quite some time, CSEA members have been pressing for increases at OSBI in particular in order to keep up with municipal and private sector pay. The agency, under the new leadership of Commissioner Michele

Gilman, has finally answered the call. The parties entered into an agreement that provides for significant grade adjustment and advantageous slotting in exchange for the state to be able to hire new employees at a higher rate. Initially, the state was only willing to make adjustments in the OSBI where recruitment has been a major issue, but Dan Wagoner, a P4 leader in DAS who led the union's efforts, successfully captured adjustments in the OSFM as well. Wagoner reflected on the victory, stating "Our brothers and sisters are now living with the effects of the silver tsunami and years of the state's mission to do more with less. It is important that when the state looks to find ways to attract new employees, we ensure our existing brothers and sisters are not overlooked and we fight for our existing

people to be treated fairly. With this victory we ensured our existing members in OSBI are paid more fairly and that their colleagues in the Office of the State Fire Marshal were not ignored. Both of these groups of members provide a vital service throughout the state to enforce the state fire and building codes. For the last 4 years we fought with our partners to stop the efforts to privatize the building officials and today we have negotiated pay increases for the men and women who perform this vital public service to the citizens of CT." This victory is a great example of union leaders using existing leverage to win gains for the membership. Collectively, we must always be on the look-out for such opportunities. Congratulations to CSEA members in the OSBI and the OSFM!

Convention Awards



ABOVE: Karen Pineman was presented the Robert D. Rinker Award last month at her Chapter meeting since she was unable to attend the Convention in October.

A full list of awardees is below:

Volunteer Service Award - Alex Finch
Mike Molinaro Award for Collective Action - Cynthia Ross-Zweig

President's Awards: Cathy Osten
Stephen Anderson and Roland Bishop

President's Awards for Leadership:
P3A: Adrian Wood, Agnes Quinones and Regina Hopkins

P4 - Mark Kirschner

CSC - Millie Brown

Inspectors: Jack Bannon and Joe Hurley

SJM: Tom Grodecki and Mark O'Brien

Childcare - Queen Freelove

Council 760 - Theresa Leon-Guerrero and Sandy DiPino

Paras - Sherry Cutler

C400 - Ed Daly and Tom Connolly

P3B Members at the Capitol

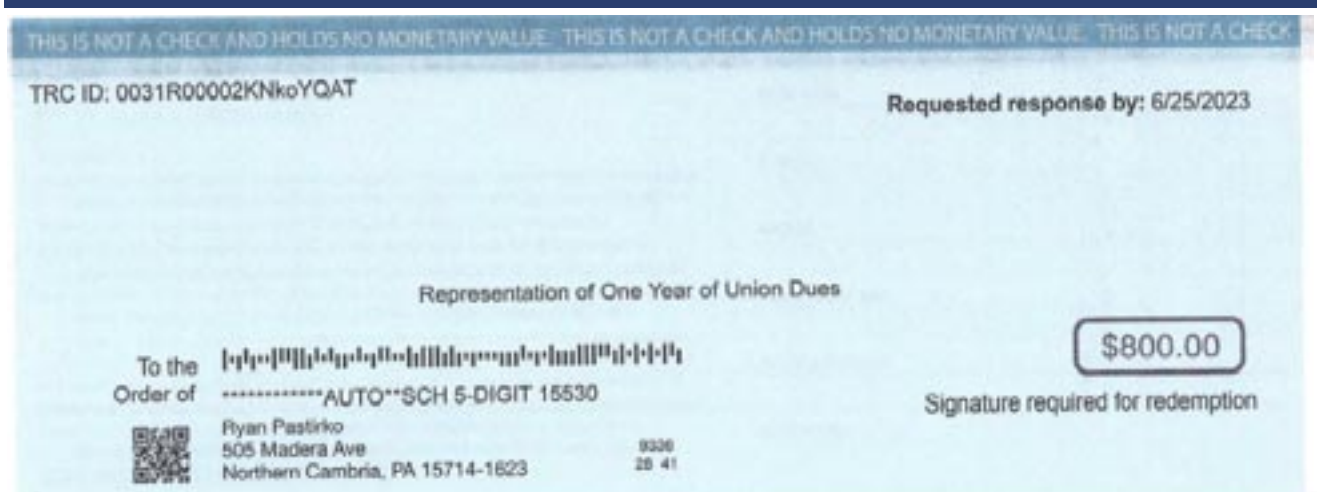
P3B Members had a busy day at the Capitol on June 7th where they arrived in their signature SEIU purple shirts to stand in solidarity with our allies in SEIU 1199 who were on strike for fair wages and benefits (the strike has since

ended) and to watch the passage of the agreement for State School Principals and Behavioral Health Clinical Supervisors who recently joined the P3B bargaining unit.



ABOVE: P3B Members cheer in matching SEIU purple shirts outside of the Legislative Office Building.

Freedom Foundation Scam



ABOVE: The Freedom Foundation, an anti-union billionaire-funded special interest group, latest scam to trick members into leaving their union involves fake checks. See Page 1 for the full story.

Pandemic Pay

How CSEA Members can Support Their Fight!

CSEA and SEBAC have been working diligently to ensure that each and every state frontline essential worker receives their pandemic pay as soon as possible, however we were made aware that CORE has performed an audit of employees, who according to their records would have been eligible for a pandemic payment, but were not included in the payout

lists for the June 16th paycheck.

At this time, an inquiry is under review with your agency, CSEA can take no further action until your respective agency reports back, but once your agency responds to the initial inquiry, we will follow up with more information on an individual basis.

Former Governor Lowell Weicker Passes at 92

Lowell Palmer Weicker, Jr. former United States Senator and Governor of Connecticut, died on June 28th following a short illness.

He settled and practiced law in Greenwich, Connecticut, became First Selectman and represented Greenwich in the Connecticut General Assembly. In 1968, he was elected to represent Connecticut's Fourth District in Congress. In 1970, at the age of 39, Weicker was elected to the United States Senate, where he achieved national prominence as a member of the Senate Watergate Committee.

But for CSEA members, most of us remember him for his time as Governor when he was elected in 1990 as the first independent to be elected.

Former CSEA Executive Director, Bob Rinker, has provided a personal memory about former Governor Weicker, as CSEA and SEBAC were negotiating the 1991 SEBAC Agreement:

On June 28th, I learned of the death of former US Senator and Governor Lowell P. Weicker. Immediately and in the days after, memories of the former governor flooded back to me. As I reflect on Governor Weicker's life, I remember him as so much more than the man vilified for going back on his promise not to raise taxes. Lowell Weicker was a man of strong principles, strength and practicality. That is not to say he was an easy man to work with. I sat across the bargaining table with him during the one of the hardest battles ever fought by Connecticut state employees. In 1991, both the Governor and I faced significant challenges. 1991 was the longest year of my life. My second son was born on December 30th of the preceding year and

my oldest child was entering kindergarten. Just the family obligations alone were all consuming. But adding in the unprecedented budget crisis, the battle over the state income tax and the pressures of negotiating a concession agreement resulted in the longest year of my life. I was the Executive Director of CSEA and its representative to the State Employee Bargaining Agent Coalition (SEBAC). Besides being CSEA's representative, I was also the coalition's numbers guy. This was before Excel spreadsheets and laptop computers. The costing was done by pencil, paper and a handheld calculator. Robert Krzys, CSEA's General Counsel at the time, was also the chief spokesperson for SEBAC. Bob and I bonded during that incredibly pressure-packed time. I remember that we would go bowling during breaks in the action, just to relieve the stress from the immense crisis that was at hand for state workers. During his campaign for governor, Weicker had indicated that he would not seek a state income tax. But upon assuming the office, the reality of the situation began to set in. Early on in his administration, SEBAC union leaders were asked to meet in the Governor's office at the State Capitol. He asked us where we stood on the state income tax. Our response was that we favored it as a way of supporting state services. He then looked up and pointed to Bill Cibes, Secretary of OPM sitting across the room and said, "That guy has convinced me that we cannot get out of this budget crisis without one." The fact was that the budget deficit inherited by his administration was \$965 million out of a \$6

billion budget. This was the largest deficit in proportion to the state budget in Connecticut history. Weicker's requests that day were simple 1) Union support for the state income tax and 2) \$400 million in state employee concessions. The first was easy, the second was much harder. The Governor wanted to tie concessions to the state income tax rather than the three budgets passed by the General Assembly none of which included an income tax, and all of which included concession savings. Union leaders were in his office when one of those budgets was passed and he said to his staff, "Get that budget up here right now." He went to his desk, stamped VETO on the budget, and told his staff to tell the General Assembly to get back to work. Then, he turned to us and said, "Now where were we?" Classic Weicker. Our contentious time with Weicker intensified around July 1st because, despite this monster budget deficit, many state employees were due to be paid their annual increments that month. During the acrimonious weeks that ensued, the General Assembly passed the state income tax as part of a budget deal that included \$400 million in assumed concessionary savings from state workers. Shortly thereafter, the Governor invited union leaders to his residence. I remember asking the Governor if it mattered how he got the money called for in the budget and he said, "No." His answer was premature since others in his administration were committed to the concept of maximizing pain for state workers, which of course cast a dark shadow on the process. The negotiations were difficult to say the least be-

cause of the massive amount of required savings in addition to the fact that the 1991 annual increments had already been paid to thousands of state workers. Weicker was directly involved in the negotiations, which were conducted at the Governor's residence. A stalemate emerged and continued into December, when then DOL Deputy Commissioner Larry Fox intervened. Fox called for a meeting of union leaders at CSEA Headquarters and asked us what we thought the problem was. We responded that the Governor did not want to reach an agreement. Fox told us to wait at CSEA while he went to the Capitol to meet with Weicker. I sat and prayed that a positive response would come back from the Governor. Fox returned and told us that Weicker thought we did not want an agreement, but that he did. My prayers were answered. For four straight days and three straight nights we negotiated at CSEA until each of the unions reached a tentative agreement to bring to the members with a recommendation for ratification. CSEA members overwhelmingly ratified the agreements. In the end, Weicker was true to his comment to me that he didn't care where the money came from. As such, we reached an agreement consistent with union goals; the deal did not fundamentally change the structure of our pensions, active health care benefits, or the recently achieved 100% paid for retiree health insurance. Stay tuned for part two of my Governor Weicker recollections which will appear in the next issue of the CSEA News – it will be about the rest of the Weicker Administration and the highlights and one lowlight for CSEA members.

Remain Cautious About Potential Scams

By: Kevin Sullivan,
Retiree Organizer

We have received reports from retirees who have been contacted by individuals claiming to be from their doctor's office. These callers ask for financial information or W-2 forms under the guise of helping retirees qualify for special assistance to obtain free prescriptions.

REMEMBER TO NEVER DISCLOSE INFORMATION OVER THE PHONE TO UNSOLICITED CALLERS.

If someone claiming to be from the pharmacy, insurance provider, or your doctor's office asks for personal information, hang up immediately. Your doctor's office and pharmacy already possess your insurance card, which is the only information they require. To verify the legitimacy of the call, you can call back the pharmacy or your doctor's office directly.

Connecticut Retiree Health Insurance provides exceptional coverage and benefits. It is crucial for everyone to understand that there are scammers out there targeting unsuspecting individuals, taking advantage of them in seemingly innocent ways. Refrain from sharing personal information over the phone.

According to the National Council on Aging, scams aimed at older adults are increasing. In 2021 alone, there were 92,371 older victims of fraud, resulting in losses of \$1.7 billion.

The most common financial scams targeting seniors include government impersonation scams, sweepstakes scams, and robocall scams.

Financial scams targeting older adults are becoming more prevalent, widespread, and damaging. In 2021, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) reported a 74% increase in losses, with 92,371 older victims falling prey to fraud, resulting in \$1.7 billion in losses.

Why do scammers target older adults for financial fraud? Fraudsters and con artists often perceive older adults as having substantial financial resources. However, even older adults with limited incomes are at risk of falling victim to fraud.

Financial scams are frequently underreported or challenging to prosecute, making them appear as "low-risk" crimes. However, they can have devastating effects on older adults, leaving them in vulnera-

ble positions with limited means to recover their losses

Just how prevalent are financial scams targeting older adults? The U.S. Senate Special Committee on Aging Fraud Hotline received over 8,000 complaints nationwide in the five-year period ending in December 2020.

The following five scams accounted for over 65% of these complaints:

1. Government impersonation scams: Scammers pretend to represent the IRS, Social Security Administration, or Medicare. They may demand payment for alleged unpaid taxes or threaten to cut off benefits if personal information is not provided.

2. Sweepstakes and lottery scams: Scammers inform older adults that they have won a lottery or prize but require upfront payment for taxes and fees. No prize is ever delivered, and victims may be continuously targeted for further payments.

3. Robocalls and phone scams: Fraudsters utilize automated technology to target trusting older adults with various scams, including warranty expiration scams and "Can you hear me?" scams that record voice signatures for unauthorized charges.

4. Computer tech support scams: Scammers exploit older adults' lack of tech knowledge by posing as tech support representatives

who demand payment or request remote access to fix nonexistent issues.

5. The grandparent scam: Scammers pretend to be grandchildren in urgent need of money, relying on the emotional vulnerability of older adults to extract funds through gift cards or money transfers.

Additionally, Medicare and health insurance scams, internet and email fraud, and other deceptive tactics are used to defraud older adults.

It is a challenging time, but you can safeguard yourself. Stay alert, exercise caution, and never disclose personal information over the phone to anyone!

Council 400

Summer Picnic

Wednesday, August 9, 2023 11AM-4PM

The Farmington Polo Club
162 Town Farm Road, Farmington, CT 06032

\$15 for Members	Buffet: 12Noon – 2:30PM
\$25 for Non-Member spouses	Menu – Hamburgers, veggie burgers, hotdogs, chicken, NE Clam Chowder and MUCH More...
\$38 for Guests	Cash Bar – Non-Alcohol beverages Served ALL Day.

PLEASE COMPLETE THIS COUPON **RSVP by Aug 1st**

Member: _____ Spouse: _____

Address: _____

Phone No.: _____

Chapter# - Location: _____

No. of Guests: _____ Guest Names: _____

\$ Amount Enclosed: _____

Mail completed coupon and check payable to **"CSEA Council 400"**
C/O **Tina Franco, 45 Peach Orchard rd, Prospect, CT 06712-1052**

CUT OFF & SUBMIT THIS REGISTRATION FORM TO ATTEND

Legislative Session Wraps Up

continued from page 1 the wealthy, coupled with the constitutional spending cap making it virtually impossible to spend any additional revenue, there was not enough appetite among General Assembly members to take action on our proposals to increase revenue or include any increased spending on the multitude of investments Connecticut needs.

SEBAC Legislative Proposals:

Senate Bill 1157: would have exempted the residential addresses of public employees from being released via a Freedom of Information (FOI) request. And while the bill passed out of the Senate and was called in the House, ultimately a lengthy floor debate prevented it from being called for a vote; in blunt terms: it was talked to death. On the upside, numerous legislators are committed to run this bill next year, and run it early to avoid what happened this year.

Senate Bill 1223 would have strengthened the State Contracting Standards Board. It nearly ran in the Senate, but UCONN Health started a heavily-resourced lobbying attack against it. This is another bill that has broad support from General Assembly members who remain committed to its eventual passage.

Senate Bill 984, to put it simply and quickly, helps speed up the state hiring process to address the shortstaffing that we see through state service. It passed both chambers and was Signed into law by Governor Lamont.

Reliable and Affordable Healthcare for Municipal and Board of Education Workers:

The spending cap and the financial difficulties in the Partnership Plan helped prevent any meaningful progress on improving healthcare options for muni and BOE workers. This is and will remain a critical issue to resolve, so we'll be back next session.

School Paraeducator Advisory Council Legislative Proposals:

Our original paraeducator bill, House Bill 6881, did not move forward, but parts of it were in-

corporated into different bills, and the budget and implementor contain funding and

language to improve healthcare for paraeducators.

Several of the policy sections of HB 6881, the original paraeducator bill, were put into House Bill 6880; specifically, Secs. 1, 2, and 5 of HB 6881 are now Secs. 10, 11, and 12 of HB 6880:

- Section 10: Requires that the 18-hours of professional development for paraeducators cannot include already mandated "trainings such as trainings regarding blood-borne pathogens, the policies and procedures of the Department of Children and Families and sexual harassment."

- Section 11: Adds at least one paraeducator to the "professional development and evaluation committees" that boards of education are required to establish. It also requires SDE, working with the School Paraeducator Advisory Council, to no later than January 1, 2025 "develop or update guidance and best practices for programs of professional development provided for paraeducators, and (B) distribute such guidance and best practices to each local and regional board of education."

- Section 12: Allows paraeducators, with a supervisor, to review the educational program developed through the PPT process.

The budget and implementor, House Bill 6941, contains several sections on healthcare for paraeducators:

- Sec. 213: establishes, through the Comptroller, a program to provide a subsidy for paraeducators who have a Health Savings Account. As we understand it, the intent of this is to provide these subsidies for one year as a bridge to a better and more sustainable healthcare plan for paraeducators.

- Sec. 214: establishes, through the Comptroller, a program to provide a subsidy for paraeducators to purchase a Silver Level plan through the exchange. This program would start with the fiscal year on July 1, 2024.

- The stipends in Secs. 213 & 214 would be available to all paras who meet certain

eligibility criteria tied to the actuarial value of the health plan offered by their school district. The Comptroller can increase the actuarial value limit until at least half of all paras are eligible - so there is a variability built in which is designed to maximize the number of eligible paras. \$5 million in each fiscal year was appropriated for the stipends, so this will all be "within available appropriations." Lobbyists, staff, and leaders for paraeducator unions are meeting with staff in the Comptroller's office to develop and implement the stipend/subsidy programs.

- Sec. 215: the Office of Health Strategy shall assist paraeducators in enrolling in plans such as Covered Connecticut.

- Sec. 216: establishes a paraeducator healthcare working group to "study health care access, equity and affordability for paraeducators". The results of the study and any legislative recommendations must be submitted to the General Assembly by July 1, 2024.

- HB 6941 and HB 6880 have been signed by the Governor.

Pandemic Pay for Municipal and Board of Education Workers: Like with healthcare for muni and BOE workers, the spending cap prevents the appropriation of the funds that would be needed for something like this - yet another example where working people, frontline essential workers, are losing out because of an unnecessary fixation on the spending cap.

Expansion and

Improvement of the Paid Sick Days Law:

Senate Bill 1178 would have made a number of improvements to Connecticut's first in the nation paid sick days law. Improvements that would have brought our state in line with the paid sick days laws that have passed in other states since Connecticut first took action. While it passed out of the Senate, it was killed in the House without debate or a vote.

Passage of the Collective Bargaining Agreements:

Contracts for Behavioral Health Clinical Supervisors (House Resolution 29/Senate Resolution 27) and State School Principals (House Resolution 30/Senate Resolution 28), both in the P3B bargaining unit, passed through the House and

Senate, as did the contract for family child care providers (House Resolution 32/Senate Resolution 31).

Improving Indoor Air Quality in Schools:

The recommendations of the School IAQ working group started in Senate Bill 1198, but ultimately ended up passing as part of Senate Bill 1. Sec. 42 of that bill expands the charge of, and extends the deadline for, the working group. SB 1 has been signed by the Governor.

Justice Reinvestment Coalition Legislative Proposals:

Another area where the spending cap and lack of political will held back any significant progress. Increasing funding for Unified School District #1 in the Department of Correction, will remain a priority and needs to be a part of any conversation around criminal justice reform. Early Voting Implementation and **No-Excuse Absentee Voting Constitutional Amendment:**

House Bill 5004 "establishes a framework for early, in-person voting for all general elections, primaries, and special elections, held on or after January 1, 2024. Specifically, it requires a 14-day early voting period for general elections, a seven-day period for most primaries, and a four-day early voting period for special elections and presidential preference primaries." This bill passed both chambers and has been signed by the Governor.

House Joint Resolution 1 is the constitutional amendment to allow for no excuse absentee voting. It passed both chambers and the issue will be before voters in the November 2024 election.

Collective Bargaining Rights for Probate Court Workers: Senate Bill 912 would have given the workers in the probate court system the ability to choose to join a union and exercise their collective bargaining rights. As it has in previous years, it was given a fiscal note and got bottled up in the Appropriations Committee. We'll be taking another run at this next session.

Safety and Security in Connecticut's Courthouses:

Legislation around this issue failed to come together as we are awaiting reports from the Judicial Branch leadership before moving forward.

NASHTU & SEIU Conferences

CSEA Members Travel to D.C. and San Francisco

CSEA members have been busy across the country gearing up for big fights ahead. Last month, we had members attending two separate conferences - the 23rd Annual National Association of State Highway and Transportation Unions (NASHTU) Conference and the SEIU Digital Communications Conference.

The NASHTU Conference was held in Washington, D.C. where union leaders and staff gathered to lobby their federal representatives and discuss upcoming federal legislative opportunities and challenges. This year, the P4 Council sent three members: Travis Woodward, Kara Chandler and Amber Berry. They met with Congressman John Larson and

Congressman Jim Himes in their offices at the Capitol, along with Congresswoman Jahana Hayes virtually and staff from Congressman Joe Courtney and Congresswoman Rosa DeLauro. Meanwhile Beverly Lee, Cynthia Ross-Zweig and Katherine Lantigua joined Communications Director Drew Stoner in San Francisco for the SEIU Digital

Communications Conference which wrapped up a year-long, \$50,000 communications grant CSEA won. They met with staff and leaders from across the country to discuss how we can expand our use of digital tools to improve our communications and organizing departments.



ABOVE: Beverly Lee (CSEA Treasurer, CSC President), Cynthia Ross-Zweig (Para President) and Katherine Lantigua (Childcare President) joined SEIU members and staff from across the country to discuss digital communication strategies.



ABOVE: (FROM LEFT TO RIGHT): Kara Chandler, Congressman John Larson, Amber Berry and Travis Woodward



ABOVE: (FROM LEFT TO RIGHT): Travis Woodward, Kara Chandler, Congressman Jim Himes and Amber Berry.

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