



COMMUNIQUE

STATE LEGISLATURE MOVES FAST TO GET RECORD NUMBER OF BILLS SIGNED INTO LAW

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In the late hours of the session on March 12, 2019, the New York State Senate passed S.1826-A, the save "New York Call Center Jobs" Act. During its passage, one Senator after another stood to explain his or her vote. Each one vocalized the importance of keeping jobs in New York, especially when the call center's corporation had received a tax break or grant from the people of New York State. And after each Senator thanked the bill's sponsor, they then thanked CWA — on the record, on the floor of the Senate — for more than a decade of struggle to make this happen. What changed?

One thing that many of the Senators who stood to speak in support of the bill had in common is that most were part of the new freshman class of 2019. These senators were part of a new majority that turned the senate into a progressive, pro-union bastion. Some long-term and entrenched members were discarded, and we also lost some of 1180's historical champions. But those losses, while disappointing, have been overshadowed with hope because the resulting Senate has demonstrated the ability and willingness to work with the Assembly and pass bills that would not have previously even come to the floor for a vote. We now are beginning to enjoy those spoils, because the old process is gone.

In addition to working on the budget, legislators have been working furiously to pass other legislation that for years had been held up. So far this year, 42 bills passed in both houses and the governor signed 19 bills (see above chart). This is a vast improvement from past years. None of this would have happened under the former makeup and leadership of the New York State Senate.

One of Local 1180's most important legislative issues this year is a bill that would make it illegal to inquire about a person's salary history in order to make a salary offer during an employment interview. This will help close the persistent gender pay gap where a woman makes much less than a man, and where a woman of color makes dramatically less than a white man. This statewide initiative will expand upon Local 1180's success last year in helping to pass a similar measure in New York City with our community Partners from PowHer NY and A Better Balance. A second legislative priority is working to protect the privacy of public workers. This provision will keep outside, anti-union forces from accessing members' private records and prevent them from visiting, calling, emailing, or otherwise harassing us. This is an important "next-step" in the fight against the effects of the Janus decision.

Thirdly, Local 1180 is seeking funding for the Murphy Institute, now known as the City University of New York, School of Labor and Urban Studies (CUNY SLU). For many years, Local 1180 led the struggle to establish and keep funding for this critical institution. This year, we continue the fight to retain the funding needed for this new school and provide both transitional and ongoing funding so that working people can not only learn about labor history, but also receive the critical education they need to advance in their careers.

Finally, we are fighting to restore cuts to Medicaid funding that were proposed in the New York State budget. The proposal would have cut Medicaid funding by \$550 million overall and would result in a funding shortfall for NYC H+H of about \$40 million. Along with other unions, community groups, and hospitals, we are opposed to this cut and are working to restore and expand the funding.

The annual CWA Lobby Day was on March 12. Approximately 100 Local 1180 members supported the issues along with many other issues that are important to our sisters and brothers in CWA. Just like ours, the ones critical to them have been stuck in the quicksand for many decades and are now seeing the potential to pass. Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins came to talk to CWA, and was joined by Jessica Ramos, Chair of the Senate Labor Committee, Assemblywoman Diana Richardson, and Senator Zellnor Myrie. Of course, Local 1180 President Gloria Middleton inspired the crowd, which consisted of a majority of 1180 members. Members participated in approximately 25 individual lobby visits, and just as many visits with legislators by speaking with them in the lobby outside the chambers. It was a virtual sea of red! The veterans of 1180 taught new participants the ropes, and many came to realize how important it is to make our voices heard. Several new participants said that they are ready to come back again! Thanks to Second Vice President Gerald Brown for getting us there so we could demonstrate our prowess!

"Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose!" — "The more things change, the more they stay the same!" While this may be true in many areas of our lives, it is not when it comes to the 2019 New York State Senate. One thing we know for sure is that this is the dawn of a new day, the beginning of a new paradigm. "Once social change begins, it cannot be reversed. We have seen the future, and the future is ours," said Caesar Chavez. Nothing could be further from the truth. ■