PEF Div. 194

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The Spark

A quarterly newsletter

Spring 2024

A. Noble, ed.

From Your Council Leader:

What's Going on With PEF Elections?

Carlos Garcia

Well, we are in the midst of "PEF election season". There will be as many as four elections going on in the next few months where members may be asked to sign a petition and vote.

PEF has historically been recognized as one of the most democratic unions in the nation.

Please participate in selecting the leaders of your union at all levels of the organization.

1. PEF Triennial Election

The PEF Triennial elections are the elections which take place every three years for the purpose of electing the union's statewide officers. The statewide officers are: President, Secretary-Treasurer, (3) Vice- Presidents and (3) Trustees.

Also running for office during this time are candidates for one of the twelve Regional Coordinator positions and candidates for one of the 109 members of the PEF Executive Board.

The PEF Triennial election period began on March 4, 2024, and members began signing petitions for candidates on March 25. Slates or any independent potential candidate must receive signatures of at least 5% of the PEF membership (or 2,580 signatures) to be on the ballot for the statewide offices. Regional coordinator candidates and Executive Board candidates also need 5% of their respective constituencies in order to be on the ballot. If multiple candidates for the same position collect the required number of signatures during the petitioning period (March 25 to April 24, 2024), there will be an election. (*Continued on page 2*).

Division 194 Holiday Gathering January 26, 2024, at the Century House!

Members of the division enjoy an evening of dinner, dancing, and camaraderie at Latham's The Century House on January 26, 2024. A good time was had by all! Special thanks to Aubrey Seppa-Hodgkins for her efforts to organize the event as head of the Division 194 Social Committee (*Photo courtesy of Aubrey Seppa-Hodgkins*).



Higher Education Differential News

Carlos Garcia

Please be advised that the deadline for employees to submit qualifying credentials for the PEF Higher Education Differential **has been extended to close of business on May 3, 2024.**

Payment will not be delayed for employees who submitted qualifying credentials on or before the original March 29 deadline. However, with the extended deadline, NYSED is now able to accept qualifying credentials through **May 3, 2024**. (*Continued on page 3*).

From Your Council Leader (cont.)

As of April 15, there were two slates who have collected enough valid signatures (which still need to be certified), which would lead to an election upon completion of the certification process.

Ballots for the election will go out on June 3 and the ballots would be counted on June 25. If one slate or candidate for a specific office does not get the required number of signatures, there will be no election and the other slate/candidate would be automatically seated.

2. PEF Convention Delegate

PEF holds an annual convention to do the business of the union. The PEF Convention will be held on September 15-18, 2024 in Syracuse, New York. Any member can run to be a delegate to the convention representing their agency. You do not have to hold an elected position such as steward to run to be a delegate.

There will be 22 delegate positions for PEF Division 194 in Albany. There will be a petitioning period like in the PEF Triennial elections. The petitioning period for convention delegate begins April 22 and runs until May 13. A candidate only needs to get three valid signatures from eligible PEF members to run for the delegate position. As in the PEF Triennial elections, if less than 22 candidates submit petitions, they will be seated automatically. If 22 or more candidates submit a petition, there will be an election.

Please note that candidates who are seated as delegates have their lodging, meals and travel paid for by PEF. They are also eligible for Employee Organizational Leave (EOL) which means that they will not have to charge their accruals to attend the Convention.

The Convention body is the highest policy-making body in the union, so you can have a direct voice in determining how our union is run! Please consider being a delegate representing PEF members since Division 194 has not had a full contingency of delegates in years.

3. PEF Division 194 Steward

The Regular election for all 22 PEF Division 194 Steward positions has been scheduled as follows:
Email and postcard notification goes out to all eligible members: 3/26/24
Petitions available at www.pef.org/elections: 3/26/24
Petitions due by 5pm: 4/23/24
Ballots out (if necessary): 4/30/24
Ballots due: 5/21/24
Current term ends on May 31, 2024.

Nominating petitions for delegate elections shall require a petition signed by 5% of the membership of the appropriate constituency (or, three eligible members).

For a complete set of rules for all of the elections mentioned above, please visit: www.pef.org/elections.



New Member Orientation!

Carlos Garcia

On April 2, Division 194 held a new member orientation for 30 newly hired NYSED Professional, Scientific and Technical employees who are potential PEF members. They were given an overview of the union from a national/statewide level to the local level. While it was a lot of information, we are confident that they received adequate information to weigh the value of union membership and all the rights (including the right to vote in our elections) and privileges that come with membership. We look forward to all 30 becoming new PEF members upon the submission of completed membership applications. *(Below: Division 194 Membership Chair and Steward Vincent Commisso addresses new members at the April 2, 2024, new member orientation. Photo courtesy of Aubrey Seppa-Hodgkins).*



Higher Education Differential News (*continued from page 1*)

Please note that the extended deadline for submission does not change the requirement that the qualifying credential must be awarded/issued on or before close of business March 29.

Professional, Scientific, and Technical (PS&T) Unit employees are eligible for the Higher Education Differential through the 2023-2026 PEF contract if they hold an earned Associate's Degree, Bachelor's Degree, Master's Degree, or Doctorate (e.g. MD, JD, PhD) from an accredited college or university; or a current professional license issued by the New York State Education Department. Please note that the qualifying credential does not need to be related to an employee's assignment or position. Also note professional licenses that are expired, suspended, revoked, restricted, lapse, or annulled do not qualify, and that professional licenses issued by other entities, including the New York State Department of State are **not** eligible for the differential under the terms of Article 7.8 of the contract.

Only one qualifying credential is required to establish eligibility for the Higher Education Differential. For example, an employee does not receive a higher payment for having both a Bachelor's degree and a Master's degree. Accordingly, if you hold multiple degrees or licenses, you will only be expected to submit **one** for review.

PEF employees who qualify for the Higher Education Differential will need to upload one document for review to the Higher Education Differential Portal online as a PDF or .jpg format no later than **May 3, 2024**. Upon completion of the portal submission, employees will receive the message, "*Your response has been successfully recorded.*" Due to the anticipated volume of submissions, employees will only be contacted by the Office of Human Resources Management if their uploaded document is not acceptable to qualify for the Higher Education Differential Payment. **Documents sent after May 3, 2024, will not be accepted for the 2024-2024 payment.** The qualifying document can be an image of a transcript, degree, or professional license. **Do not send your degree, transcript, or license directly to the Office of Human Resources Management.**

New Council Leadership!

Council Leader Ved Shravah formally stepped down as leader of Division 194 in January. We thank Ved for his service and leadership through the challenging period of the COVID 19 Pandemic.

At the February 2024 Council Meeting, Assistant Council Leader Carlos Garcia was elected as our new Council Leader. Garcia brings a wealth of knowledge and experience with PEF in leadership at both the council and statewide level. We congratulate him on his election and look forward to his efforts to advance priorities for our members.

With Garcia's election, the assistant council leader position was left vacant. Division 194 Steward Aubrey Seppa-Hodgkins was elected Assistant Council Leader in March 2024. Seppa-Hodgkins has a strong record of producing for council members as a steward and as part of the Council Social Committee.

Both positions will serve until the expiration of the current term on May 31, 2024. Congratulations!

NYSBPRHALC Conference Weekend

Several members of the Division 194 Council attended February's New York State Black, Puerto Rican, Hispanic, and Asian Legislative Caucus Conference Weekend at Empire State Plaza. A visible presence by PEF members is important to advancing our members' priorities.

Pictured below, Former Council Leader Ved Shravah, Council Leader Carlos Garcia, and Division Steward Aaron Noble with SUNY Chancellor John King (*Photo Courtesy of Carlos Garcia*).



Your Division 194 Council at Work!

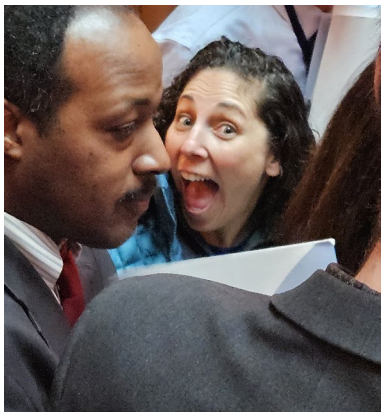
Members of the Division 194 Council recently participated at a March 19, 2024, rally at the New York State Capitol organized by "Arts + Culture = NY." Among the priorities advocated at the event is the proposed legislation by Assembly Member Patricia Fahy to increase the Cultural Education Fee. This fee, which has not been raised in more than two decades, is a major funding component for Division 194 members in the New York State Museum, Archives, and Library, and is critical for their ability to effectively serve the needs of New York State residents. Pictured below, Division 194 Treasurer, E-Board Representative, and State Museum Research and Collections Technician Sean "Mickey' Dobbin addresses the crowd about the importance of the Cultural Education Fee and the work of New York's Public Employees (*Photo courtesy of Carlos Garcia*).



Fix Tier 6!

Division 194 members and leadership participated in PEF's "Fix Tier 6" Rally at the New York State Capitol. Pictured below, Council Leader Carlos Garcia (left) and Division 194 member Elyse Loughlin (right) at the rally on the Million Dollar Staircase (*Photo Courtesy of Carlos Garcia*).





PEF Continues to Advocate Against Toxic Work Environments

Among PEF's legislative priorities for the 2024 calendar year is legislation that will codify protections for members against toxic workplaces and hostile managers. If you are a victim of a toxic workplace, contact your Council Leader or stewards immediately.



Please report instances of bullying or toxic management to your PEF steward or council leadership. Our members are dedicated public servants and deserve to be treated as professionals.

Together, we can end workplace bullying!

Get Involved!

Have previous union experience? Want to get involved? The next election for Division 194 stewards is coming up! If you are wondering what it takes to be a PEF steward, please get in touch! We are always looking for members ready to take that next step in engaging with the union and advocating for their colleagues. Email any questions to: PEFDivision194Communications@gmail.com.



Member Update: Dental Stipend

The retroactive $400 dental stipend awarded in the contract for the 2023 calendar year was distributed in March 2024 to all eligible members. Please let us know if you did not receive your stipend in the March 13, 2024, paycheck.

The State has signed a contract with a new carrier, Anthem Blue Cross, with coverage effective late September or early October 2024. We will provide more information in a future edition of the newsletter.

Your Division 194 Council

Carlos Garcia, Council Leader

Aubrey Seppa-Hodgkins, Assistant Council Leader

Sean "Mickey" Dobbin, Treasurer

Pam Modzel, Secretary

Sean B. Brown

Vincent Commisso

Jamie DiGuadio

James Folts

Satish Frazer

Beth Karalak

Laura Montgomery

Julia Nagle

Aaron Noble

Michael Nucci

Caitlin Ohlsen

Aisha Peterson

Lynn Ricciardi

Dr. Ved Shravah

Surya Narayana Murthy Vemparalla

Division 194 Treasurer's Report

The financial health of Division 194 remains strong, enabling us to put your dues payments to work for **you!**

Your dues contributions have allowed Division 194 to host a Winter Gathering in January at the Century House in Latham, as well as subsidize holiday at regional offices across the state.

The Division Council has approved purchase of PPE for members at the Cultural Education Center impacted by the construction noise at that location.

We are also able to provide lunch for new SED employees in PEF represented titles as part of a new hire orientation. This allows Division leadership to provide information to new employees about the benefits of belonging to PEF!

The 2024 Graduation Award Program is open. If you have a child graduating in 2023-2024, your student is eligible for a $200 award. This is not a scholarship, and there is no requirement for them to receive it. Please be sure to apply for this program by contacting your Division 194 Treasurer.

If members would like more detailed information about Division finances, would like to suggest potential charities, or want more information on the graduation award or other reimbursement programs offered by Division 194, please contact our treasurer at mickeydobbin@gmail.com.

Health and Safety Updates

We are grateful for the efforts of Statewide Health and Safety Chair Beth Karalak and Local Health and Safety (Albany) Chair Vincenzo Commisso to keep NYSED accountable to our members and provide a safe and healthy worksite for all employees.

A significant area of concern remains the lack of effective communication between management and employees over areas of potential Health and Safety concern. This problem has become acute with the ongoing construction on the outdoor terrace spaces at the Cultural Education Center. Your Division Council will continue to press for improvements in the effectiveness and timeliness of communications from SED leadership, particularly from certain offices and departments.

To ensure the health and safety of our members, we need YOUR HELP. Please report any concerns about safety issues at your worksite to the appropriate facility management, security, your health and safety chair, and your stewards. You can also contact the Health and Safety Committee directly by emailing PEFDivision194Communications@gmail.com.

Thank you for your help!

IF YOU **SEE** SOMETHING, **SAY** SOMETHING!

"From the tiniest spark may burst forth a mighty flame." ~ **Dante Alighieri**