



# CAPITAL REGION DISPATCH

June  
2020

**SPECIAL EDITION**

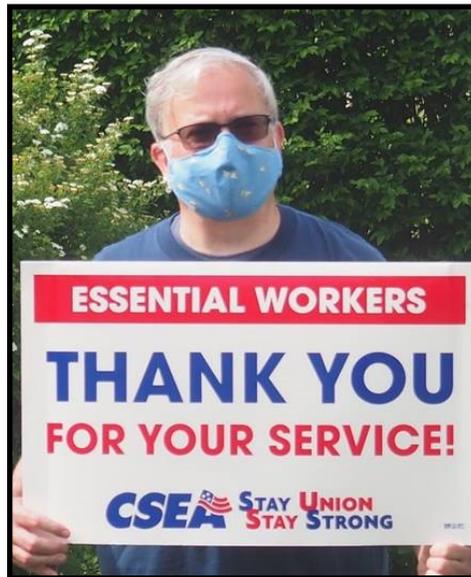
With so much in the world happening we are issuing a special Dispatch. This issue will discuss the return to workspaces that many of you will be doing in the near future. We would love to have meetings with all of you about the issues but don't think that will happen for a little bit. We encourage you to stay informed and ask questions. Working families need to stay together to stay safe. President Briggs will focus on the killing of George Floyd and the protests to end racism. President Briggs has asked each Region Committee to place a focus on this fight. He believes that as a labor movement must stand up and collectively have our voices heard that we are in this together. If you have comments for him, please feel free to share it at [ron.briggs@cseainc.org](mailto:ron.briggs@cseainc.org). Remember WE STAND TOGETHER IN UNIONISM.

## President's Message

### **A View From Here**

by Ron Briggs

As I sat and watched the life being taken away from George Floyd, I felt overwhelmed with emotions. I was horrified that someone could do this to another human being, when it sunk in that it was someone sworn to uphold law and justice I just cried. In the days that followed I did what many older(ish) white people did. I spoke with others who felt similarly, I spoke to many who are black and discussed the situation. What I didn't do is find my voice to try and challenge those who don't see things the same way I may, until I started this article. See the easy route would be to examine this issue from afar, but the much harder route is to examine this issue up close and that is what I hope I start



Ron Briggs  
CSEA Capital Region  
President

to do and ask for you to join me on that experience. It can no longer be enough for us in the labor movement to say we condemn racism. We must actively start to end racism. I must look within my-

self and ask questions and find answers. Recently, I watched a town hall meeting hosted by the Discovery Group. In that meeting, a white woman said that she is searching for answers and lessons to help her children understand. She went on to say her children have black friends but that the children don't see color. A black woman explained that by saying that her children don't see color, that is making that other child invisible. That child has black skin, that is a fact and to deny that is denying that child. We have black members. Are we seeing them? Do we, as predominately white members, open ourselves up, as the woman on the town hall meeting did, and listen to the experiences of black members in our agency, local or region? We must do better.

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I am working with each Region Committee challenging them to start conversations and activities that will make Region 4 anti-racist. I hope that you will share your thoughts and ideas and please bring back ideas to your fellow members where you work. I would like this conversation to be guided by a statement of the Rev. Terry Melvin who is the NYS AFL-CIO Secretary/Treasurer and the President of the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists. His statement was, "let's not tie ourselves up with the rioters that were looting or the police that were violent – there judgement is with God." I agree and would like us to focus on everyone else. How can we take steps to make sure we are anti-racism? In this moment we may need to take a step back from our initial reaction to what is happening. Recently, Mayor Madden from Troy said this "When

people say that black lives matter, they are not saying that only black lives matter. They are saying that black lives matter so that all lives will matter. That important nuance is too often missed." Black Lives Matter.

I do not have all the answers, nor do I know how to find all the answers. What I know is that we must begin to speak to each other, we must speak out, we must value black lives as we value white lives. We must acknowledge life is experienced differently if you are black. The best analogy that I heard was this: imagine that you and a black person are standing on the side of a raging river. Each of you must jump in and swim to your goal. Your goal is to the south and the black persons goal is to the north. Ready, set, jump! Now I bet you are thinking see it is no different, but I also bet you didn't take the current into account.

See rivers (in general) flow north to south. That means that when you as a white person swim you are swimming with the current. Now you may get tired and you may need to stop and get your breath, but you probably can make the goal, because the current is pushing you forward. Now imagine you are the black person and you jump in and must swim against the current. When you stop you are swept back to where you started. If you get tired or stop too many times you may end up behind where you started. To get to your goal you must fight a current that is pushing you back.

We must do better. I ask that you join me to hold each other accountable to do better. I look forward to working to make region 4 a strong advocate to end all racism in our union and in society.

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## A Message from Derek Sinnenberg, Schenectady County Local President

I often equate being a CSEA Local President to that of a street performer who is balancing 30 plates on long narrow dowels. Each plate must be given attention so it doesn't fall. This is no different to how a local president must give attention to his/her various responsibilities. This year those responsibilities changed forever. It is the beginning of a new world. A world dealing with its first pandemic. The way we as union

members interact with each other and do our jobs has changed. Now we must be conscious of social distancing and wearing masks.

Currently, the majority of county departments have staggered work schedules. This is to help with reducing the maximum member capacity to 50%. Social distancing is also encouraged. Counties should make available PPEs to all CSEA members. This includes masks, gloves, hand

sanitizer and cleaning wipes. Moreover, many of the buildings may be equipped with wall-mounted hand sanitizers. As far as the customers we serve, each county should have a plan in place. In Schenectady County, the public will have their temperature taken, their name and address logged into a journal and a mask given if they don't have one. As we move toward fully reopening, masks

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and social distancing will be key. Social Distancing was not considered when most county buildings were designed. The 6 ft. distance between members will be a challenge for many departments who have limited space. But we can find solutions as long as we work together.

We are all trying to get back to a “normal” schedule with work life.

Before Covid-19 we would have meetings and sit and discuss issues. Now, our new normal challenges us all to find different ways to communicate with each other. Our Local Health and Safety Committee will play a vital role in not only sharing information but in helping all our members understand that the same issues may be affecting multiple lo-

cations. It is more important now than ever to keep the lines of communications open.

CSEA members need to know we are here to help. By not keeping on top of the issues facing our membership, things will break down. Just like a plate falling to the ground. Let’s all help each other keep those plates balancing.

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## Returning to work, Stateside, New Norms or Lifetime Changes

As COVID 19 remains a mystery looming over us, CSEA members from many agencies and bargaining units are being required to return to work, Let’s be clear we have had many members that were never able to work from home or have alternate work shifts remain in their work environment during the height of the infection. Now, we are facing a vast set of new challenges as members and leaders; regardless of the uncharted waters we are about to trend. One thing is for certain that there will be many new rules and regulations for us to adhere to. In State Agencies the Employee Intranet (HR Advisor) is the common resource used for Management and Employees to refer to that share’s information about rules and the compliance to these rules for that agency.

Some of the things we are aware of for State Agencies will be mandatory online training for all employees. There will be new protocols in place prior to coming into work, nuances related to possible temperature taking, wearing face mask, sitting or standing six feet from others, limited number of employees in bathrooms, break-rooms, elevators, not visiting co-worker’s workstation and smoking areas on the work premises. These are only a few of the new norms that State Agencies are implementing to ensure compliance with applicable laws and executive orders in the reopen design for NYS.

It is imperative that we all as employees of NYS adhere to all of the new regulations that have been put into place. PLEASE KNOW: Employers are issuing informal counseling, formal counseling that could possibly lead to discipline if employees do not adhere to the new regulations. There are signs being put in agencies to inform employees are the social distancing protocols. There have been members who have already been written up and/or had information about non-compliance put in their evaluations. Let us all work together to stay safe, adhere to the protocols and stay healthy.

Shana Davis  
CSEA Capital Region IV  
Executive Vice-President



# Region 4-CSEA Occupational Safety & Health Department

I hope this communication finds all of you and your families healthy and well. SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19 has changed all aspects of our daily life. This includes the workplace. We have already had a number of issues with employers failing to do enough to protect their workforce. This is inexcusable. The OSH Act of 1970, OSHA General Duty Clause states “Each employer shall furnish to each of his/her employees’ employment and a place of employment which are free from recognized hazards that are causing or are likely to cause death or serious physical harm to their employees.” In other words...**You have a right to a safe workplace.**

Employers should have thoroughly evaluated their workspaces and employee assignments to reflect the risk of the known hazard, COVID-19. This evaluation should consider exposure risks, sources of exposure and routes of transmission. Anytime there is a risk to the employee, the employer must control it using different control methods. It is best when an employer has a layering of controls in place to best protect employees. Employers should have changed their workplace to implement engineering controls (such as plexiglass barriers), administrative and work practice

controls (such as new policies or procedures) and may have even determined that personal protective equipment (such as face coverings or respirators) are required. Training and education on any new policy or procedure as well as PPE always goes hand in hand and is generally required by safety regulations.

To have a better understanding of how risky your job is as related to COVID-19, OSHA has developed a classification system for worker exposure. The higher the exposure risk the higher risk your job is and the more protections your employer needs to implement.

## **Very High Exposure Risk**

Healthcare, Morgue workers and some Laboratory workers.

## **High Exposure Risk**

Healthcare delivery and support, Medical transport and Mortuary workers.

## **Medium Exposure Risk**

Workers who have frequent and/or have close contact with public (within 6ft) that may be infected but who are not known or suspected patients.

## **Low Exposure Risk**

Workers with minimal contact with public or other coworkers (within 6ft).

The new workplace is changing and is going to take all of us to make it as safe as possible to reduce the risk. There will be challenges for all of us ahead. While the risk will never be eliminated and should never be underestimated it can be reduced to a safe and manageable level. CSEA’s expectation is that employers are following all current CDC, OSHA and NYS DOH guidance as well as the Governors Executive orders. If you feel that your employer isn’t doing enough or you have suggestions on how things could be done safer, please reach out to your CSEA Unit or Local President to communicate it. If questions arise, I’m here and available for all technical support and guidance to navigate all the current safety regulations/guidance to help get a plan in place for remediation.

Together, we will hold employers responsible to provide a safe workplace for all of our members.

In Solidarity,  
Health and Safety Committee &  
Brian Pomeroy Area OSH Specialist

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