

New York City Amalgamated Professional Employees



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Health Equity for Claim Specialists at Transit Authority Our benefits are under attack

Governor Pataki just vetoed your bill. That was the message from Albany. We were upset but not surprised. During year 2006, Local 154 had spearheaded a coalition with several other Locals to lobby for a bill that would give health coverage to our retirees at Transit Authority in same terms and conditions as in the rest of the City. The current rule provides health coverage for retirees with at least 25 years of service at TA. However, the City of New York provides health coverage after retirement to vested members with 10 years of service.

In 2003, Local 154 had initiated actions to change this situation. We presented the issue during negotiations with the City and, later, in 2004, we drafted it and introduced a bill in Albany. Senator Marty Golden and Assemblyperson Peter Abbate sponsored this bill. During 2005, our "Health Equity Bill" passed the State Assembly but never made it to the Senate. In 2006, our Union coalition targeted State Senators extensively; President Fernandez, Chapter Chair Mobyed and other officers lobbied State legislators in their New York City and Albany offices. At the same time, we initiated a campaign to contact all Senate Transportation Committee members and their legislative staff. President Fernandez wrote letters and made calls to each one of them; Shop Steward Alan Mendelson made dozens of calls to Senators and their staff in the Committee. The tactic paid off: despite TA lobbyists' active opposition, the bill was finally supported in the Transportation Committee and moved to the floor of the Senate, where it was passed. The rest you already know. Governor Pataki vetoed the bill.

In October 2007, the DC 37 Legislative Conference agreed to support the re-introduction of our Health Equity Bill in Albany. This time, we have a new Governor in Albany. We expect Governor Spitzer to support our right to be treated equally and with dignity. But, we cannot forget that pensions and benefits are under attack throughout the country. There are some politicians claiming that Unions have too much power and workers too many benefits. Social Security has been under attack; defined pension benefits and health benefits are being constantly criticized and blamed for economic deficits. So, if we want our Health Equity Bill in place we must be vigilant and pro-active. We need you to come forward and commit yourself to help lobbying Senators and Assemblypersons. We need you to make phone calls and write letters demanding that

Health Equity be put in place. Be part of the fight, be part of the struggle. By doing so, we will be helping ourselves.

Senate Under Siege

Alan Mendelson, tireless fighter

Once our Health Equity Bill coalition agreed to launch a lobby effort on Senators in the Transportation Committee, for Alan it was a matter of said and done. He put the Senators and their staff under siege. He would spend hours convincing legislative staff on the importance of supporting our Health Equity Bill and its importance for our Claim Specialists. Aware of the TA lobbyists making their own rounds against the bill, Alan would fine-tune our positions to demonstrate the need for the Senators to support the bill. The bill became to be known as “Local 154 bill”, showing the imprint of the Local’s efforts on this matter. For Alan, his personal activism paid off when we heard that the Senate had supported the bill. It was a great reward for a man who had put his heart to it.