

# ON THE MOVE



Publication of  
CWA Local 1032, AFL-CIO



## WAKE UP!! Assault on Retirement Security is Real



Senator Jon Corzine speaks at a Statehouse rally to protect Social Security on March 24. He is joined by Congressman Frank Pallone (left) and AFL-CIO President Charles Wolkanech.

The assault on New Jersey public employee retirement security is an ember whose flames need to be snuffed. First, we have the Bush plan to “privatize” social security. Then, top state officials and the editorial boards of major state newspapers have started to flap their gums about the soaring cost of so-called “pension entitlements” – public employee pension benefits bought and paid for by a lifetime of working at below market salaries and wages. This latter attack on pension benefits is particularly galling, treating our pension plans like some kind of “welfare entitlement,” especially in view of the fact that since 1996, only employees have made any financial contribution to the pension funds. State and local government employers have deferred (not made) normal pension contributions of \$5.5 billion in that period.

Wake up members. These attacks on your retirement security are real. The bill is coming due on missteps made by policy makers in funding promised pensions and they want to send the bill to you. Know your facts and be ready to respond to threats to our pension benefits.

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## Attacks on Public Worker Pensions and Health Benefits Codey's Budget Faces Major Surgery

While Acting Governor Codey's proposed FY 2006 budget contains no immediate layoffs or benefit cuts, it appears that both Codey and the Assembly Democrats are seeking major changes in the budget. In their desperation to avoid slashing property tax rebates, public worker wages and benefits will be in the crosshairs.

The proposed budget cuts expenditures by 2.2%, with few of these cuts coming from lines directly impacting state and local government workers. The bulk of the shortfall is bridged by cutting property tax rebates (\$1.2 billion), cutting other spending (\$586 million), revenue enhancements that include selling state property (\$750 million), and various tax increases, including expanding the sales tax to services (\$505 million). In addition, revenue from the income and sales taxes are expected to be up 5-6% in fiscal 2005.

A freeze in aid to local government at the current levels should not cause any layoffs, though it may make for a tougher bargaining climate for local government workers whose contracts are up.

### Assembly Democrats Balk at Massive Cut in Property Tax Rebates

Since Codey's Budget address on March 1st, leaders of the Assembly Democrats, who face voters this fall, have made clear that they will not accept the massive \$1.2 billion cut to Property Tax rebates. As negotiations continue, they will be

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## From The Shoulder

by President Jim Marketti

Actions are underway to achieve a long time goal of the Local. For several years, we have wanted to have the capacity to visit legislators in their District offices to discuss our issues and legislative agenda. The meetings would be enhanced by bringing rank-and-file members who live in the respective Districts along with professional staff of the Local so that legislators can observe that we represent their constituents.

So far, we have targeted eighteen legislators who we want to visit in this legislative session and have made five of the visits. Having constituents from the Districts has made a huge difference in how we are listened to and responded to.

For example, last week, I attended a meeting in the District Office of Assemblyman Joe Malone (R-Bordentown). The Assemblyman seemed quite taken with the fact that members Jim Darrar (DOT) and Maria Iadanza (DOT), both of whom live in Malone's district, came with us. During the meeting, the Assemblyman

agreed with our position on every issue we discussed.

At one point, I asked the Assemblyman if he could help us out in his position as a member of the Budget Committee by supporting our two-year old bill to peg the mileage reimbursement rate for state workers who use their automobiles for state work to the Internal Revenue Service reimbursement rate. Currently, the state reimburses 31 cents per mile; the IRS sets the reimbursement rate at 40.5 cents per mile. The Assemblyman said that not only would he support us but that he would sign on as a co-sponsor of the bill.

The next day, the Assemblyman did as he promised. Will it guarantee passage of the bill? Don't know, but it can't hurt to have bipartisan support for the measure. Was the Assemblyman more supportive because Jim and Maria were there? Again, don't know for sure, but he seemed more anxious to be supportive than I've seen with other legislators at their state house offices.

In the end, the success of this program will be known by the amount of our legislative agenda that gets passed. A lot of levers and buttons get pushed to accomplish that. But don't be surprised if you get a call from the Local Office asking you to attend a meeting with a

legislator in your district. By participating, you will be helping yourself and your fellow public employees. □

## Organizing Update

Employees of Passaic County Nutrition Dept. (Meals on Wheels) who currently have an expired collective bargaining agreement with I.U.P.C & P.E. Local 911 have demonstrated an interest in Local 1032. Local 911 is the same union that represented employees from Bloomingdale Boro and Passaic Valley Water Commission, both recently organized by CWA 1032. As was the case in these locations, Meals on Wheels employees have been frustrated with the lack of representation by 911.

In response to interest from the membership, Senior Staff Rep. Mario Rivera and Organizer Migdalia Santiago met with employees to discuss the possibility of unionization. Before the discussion was over employees decided to sign authorization cards, and within a couple of days 70% of the group had signed cards to join Local 1032. Since that meeting, 92% have signed cards. A petition has been filed with P.E.R.C. and a mail ballot election is scheduled for April 22.

Stay tuned for further updates and election results.

Current efforts are underway to organize additional units. If you know somebody you think might be interested in forming a union or who just wants to have an initial conversation about the benefits of unionization, please call Mickey Santiago at 973-589-1544, or 1-800-882-1032. □



ON THE MOVE is a publication of Local 1032, Communications Workers of America, AFL-CIO.

OFFICERS: Jim Marketti, President; Michael DeSiena, Executive Vice-President; Jeanne Majors, Secretary; Paul Pologruto, Treasurer; State Bargaining Unit Vice-Presidents: Ron Schwaeble, Administrative-Clerical; Larry Gustin, Professional Unit; Alan Hardy, Primary Level Supervisor Unit; Vince Anepete, Higher Level Supervisor Unit, Robert Teets, Local Government Vice President, Jim Bailey, Other Sectors Vice President.

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TRENTON OFFICE STAFF: Maureen Baughman, Ruth Bauer, Sharon Schwaeble

SUSSEX OFFICE ASSISTANT: Nancy Holleran

NEWSLETTER EDITOR: Patrick Kavanagh

LOCAL 1032 OFFICES:

Main office  
67 Scotch Road  
Ewing, NJ 08628  
(609) 434-1032  
FAX (609) 883-8184

Newark Office  
290 Ferry Street  
Newark, NJ 07105  
(973) 589-1544  
FAX (973) 589-5304

Sussex County Office  
61 Spring Street  
Newton, NJ 07860  
(973) 579-7539  
FAX (973) 579-5649

or call 1-800-882-1032

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## WAKE UP!!

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### Social Security Debacle

President Bush has attempted to whip up hysteria about a so-called “crisis” in making Social Security payments (remember “weapons of mass destruction” in Iraq?). There is no crisis. Even if Congress does absolutely nothing between now and 2042, full social security payments can be made. After 2042, social security could make 73% of promised benefits forever. Between now and 2042, Congress would need only make minor adjustments in the payroll tax or maximum taxable amount (currently \$89,400 per year) to keep making scheduled benefit payments forever.

The claim of a “crisis” existing in Social Security is a classic example of fuzzy math. Since it was invented, social security projections have existed which showed that the funds would run out unless something was done. In 1996, for example, Trustees of the Social Security Fund projected the fund would run out in 2029. In 1998, they said it would be depleted in 2032. In 2000, the date was 2037. These projections continue to be made because the social security fund is a “pay-as-you-go” plan and not a “pre-funded” plan like most pension plans. Whatever is collected in one year from



OIT Shop Steward Tom Scott listens to speakers at the March 24th rally.



workers immediately goes to people on Social Security or into the Social Security Trust Fund (which the government borrows from and promises to pay back). *Business Week* magazine said of this fact: “The truth is that predictions of Social Security insolvency are based on estimates of ever-changing variables stretching out an incredible 75 years. They are simply not reliable.”

To solve this so-called “crisis,” Bush wants to cut guaranteed benefits by 40 percent and set up private accounts for individuals to invest. The average retiree would lose \$152,000 in guaranteed benefits and might make out if he or she was lucky to be investing in a bull stock market with high returns. If you think that is easy, ask people who had their 401(K) retirement accounts invested in 2001 and saw 40 percent losses in value.

On top of all this, the move to privatize would increase the national debt \$4.9 trillion in the first twenty years and make billions of dollars in new fees for Wall Street Firms investing our social security funds. It is little wonder that the proposal is so unpopular among Americans that even some staunch Republicans are backing away from it.

### Public Employee Pensions in New Jersey

It is very seldom that one might see the editorial boards of major state newspapers speak to the same topic in a two-week period let alone take the same point of view. That is what happened in the first two weeks of March and the topic was the high cost of public employee health & pension benefits.

The uproar was kicked off by Acting Governor Codey’s budget speech in which he decried the high cost of health & pension “entitlements” for public employees. That was followed up by the testimony of Division of Pension & Health Benefits Director Fred Beaver’s testimony to the Senate State Government Committee on March 7. Beaver alerted the Committee to the fact that by the year 2010, health & pension benefits will consume 21% of all state spending. He pointed out that since 1997, the legislature had passed seven bills that increased pension liabilities by more than \$8.8 billion.

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**Codey** *cont. from page 1*

looking to find means to finance at least a partial restoration of these rebates.

The Assembly Dems. have called for the state auditor to review all of state government with an eye to cutting programs. State worker pay increases of 2% on July 1, 2005 and 2% on January 1, 2006 will be inviting targets. Money for state health programs obtained from Horizon Blue Cross assets are another target, as will be possible sale or lease of state assets.

CWA Local 1032 and our allies will be strongly fighting any and all attacks on state workers.

**Why Constant Budget Crises? Alternative Revenue Sources**

Recently, New Jersey Policy Perspective (NJPP), a pro-public worker think tank, posed the question of why New Jersey has had a string of budget crises that are worse than most other states. While “one shot” revenue and borrowing schemes, along with patronage employees, have made the crises worse, NJPP sees the fundamental cause in the Whitman era income and sales tax cuts.

Over \$10 billion in revenue has been lost since these cuts were instituted. NJPP is working together with CWA on a number of new revenue sources for the state budget, including expansion of the sales tax to professional services such as architectural services that are taxed by many surrounding states. Another possibility is a wealth tax, which is essentially a property tax on stocks,

bonds, and other financial instruments with a value of over \$2 million (currently, the vast amount of property owned by the richest 5% of New Jersey residents is untouched by the property tax). Finally, NJPP will be issuing a report on the huge number of employees of “big box” stores like Wal-Mart whose family health insurance is paid by the state rather than their employers.

**“Cadillac” Benefits?**

While sounding somewhat positive on the issue of layoffs, Codey’s budget address featured a fierce attack on “entitlements,” a code name for public worker health and pension benefits. Shortly after the budget address, Codey’s Director of Pensions and Benefits, Fred Beaver, assailed public worker pensions and health benefits as “Cadillac” plans that are much more generous than other plans. Beaver said that health benefit costs would be up more than 10% in fiscal 2006 and up 116% in five years.

The dire predictions concerning health benefits echo a report done by Mercer Consulting for the state Treasurer. However, the Mercer report and the state budget are misleading in several ways. First, Mercer and Beaver ignore the current health insurance trend – **increases in health insurance costs for state active employees and retirees have fallen in each of the last three years. In 2005 health care cost increases for state workers and retirees are far below those of the private sector in New Jersey.**

Beaver also fails to mention that New Jersey, sandwiched between two high-cost academic medical centers – New York and Philly – has very high health care costs for both public and private employers. So it’s no surprise that health care costs for New Jersey public workers

and retirees are higher than for states like Pennsylvania and New York that have large rural and semi-rural areas with lower health care charges.

Though the budget projects a 10% increase in health costs for active state workers in fiscal 2005, much lower costs are expected by the board that oversees public worker health care costs. Effective January 2005, the State Health Benefits Commission approved increases in rates for active state employees of **only 3%** for the New Jersey Plus plan which covers most state employees, **1.2%** for HMOs, and **a half percent** for prescription drugs. The Traditional Plan (with less than 8% of active state workers) had an increase of 5.3%, still less than half the increase predicted in the budget.

In future years, the budget projects increases of 20% or more a year. However cost increases for active state employees for the last three years have only averaged 10.7% for the Traditional Plan, 11.3% for NJ PLUS, and 8.2% for prescription drugs. **Again the budget projection is double the actual experience for the last three years.**

**Which leads to the question – why launch an attack on public worker health benefits when cost increases for those benefits are falling sharply and are well below the private sector?**

CWA will not allow the Administration to manufacture crises in order to attack state worker pay and benefits. We will be watching this situation closely in the coming months.

Stay tuned for updates. □

**What’s New on the Local 1032 Website?**

Local 1032 launched a new website this past fall. The Technology Committee has worked hard to make the site more user-friendly and as informative as possible. You can read current and past issues of *On The Move*, keep up to date with the Local’s legislative program, find contact information for officers and staff, learn about your rights on the job, and much more! The website also includes an extensive collection of resource links for various issues and Union initiatives, as well as an active message board.

**Log on today: [www.cwalocal1032.org](http://www.cwalocal1032.org)**

**Beaver\* vs. Reality State Worker Health Care Cost Increases**

	BEAVER	REALITY
FY 2006 Projection	10%	2.5% (2005 CY)
5-Year Projection	20% per year	10% per year (last 3 years)

From the testimony of Fred Beaver, Director of Pensions and Benefits, before the Senate State Government Committee on March 7, 2005. The numbers from the “Reality” rows are calculated from rate increases approved by the NJ State Health Benefits Commission.

## Legislature Passes Pay to Play Ban

On February 28, the New Jersey Legislature took an historic step when the state Senate passed an effective ban on political contributions by state contractors to state and county political parties and candidates for Governor. The Assembly had already approved the ban.

Sponsored by Assemblywoman Greenstein (District 14) and strongly supported by Acting Governor Codey, the legislation is modeled on the Executive Order curtailing Pay-to-Play issued by former Governor McGreevey.

One roadblock to the new legislation was the threat of the Federal Highway Administration to cut off federal funding for transportation if the pay to play ban is applied to transportation contractors. While the State filed a lawsuit challenging the decision, in an effort to address the concerns raised by the federal government (that the ban limits competition in bidding for high-way projects), the Acting Governor conditionally vetoed the legislation and recommended an exemption for highway contracts that receive federal funding.

The Assembly approved the changes by a vote of 77-0 on March 14 and the Senate followed with a vote of 34-0 on March 21. Codey signed the bill the next day.

Effective anti Pay-to-Play legislation seemed a dead letter as recently as last

summer, but the scandal surrounding former Governor McGreevey and his effort to atone for it through his Executive Order, drastically changed the political scene.

The legislation is an important first step in reducing the suffocating grip of government contractors on government operations. Much more needs to be done such as banning contractor contributions to legislators and especially legislative committees and including county and municipal level contractors in the ban.

Stay Tuned for further updates. □

### Legislature Bans Offshore State Contracting

On Monday, March 14, 2005 the Assembly passed a comprehensive ban on the performance of any state contract work outside the US. The vote was overwhelming – 68 yes, 5 no, and 4 abstentions. The bill allows offshore work only if the work in question cannot be done in the US. Since the bill passed the New Jersey State Senate last summer, it only needs the signature of Acting Governor Codey to become law. □



## My America/ My Union

My America is not a sweatshop, one bowl of rice or a five-dollar day. My America is a living wage. My Union gave that to me.

My America is not a breadline, a soup kitchen, or an unemployment check. My America is job security and a contract. My Union gave that to me.

My America is not a lost eye, a broken back, a foot, a hand. My America is a safe workplace. My union gave that to me.

My America is not a plastic thing, a disposable nothing from somewhere. My America is quality, integrity and permanence. My Union gave that to me.

My America is not a call on the carpet, a closed door, one voice unheard. My America is equality and representation. My Union gave that to me.

My America is not silent, intimidated or afraid.

My America is Our America. My America is Our Union and we are United, Defiant, and Strong. □

Vincenzo DiRosa,

CWA Local 1111, Elmira, New York  
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## CWA LOCAL 1032 ANNUAL PICNIC

Liberty Lakes, Columbus, New Jersey

DATE: Saturday, June 11th, 2005 • TIME: 12:00 Noon - 6:00 PM

PLENTY OF GOOD FOOD, BEVERAGES, AND FUN

### SERVED FROM 12:00 NOON TO 6:00 PM:

Hamburgers; Hotdogs; Veggie Burgers; Pasta in Marinara Sauce (w/Meatballs); Bush's Baked Beans; Bar-B-Que Chicken; Home Style Potato Salad and Pasta Salad; Tomato and Cucumber Salad; Fresh Jersey

Corn on the Cob; Potato Chips and Pretzels; Tandoor Chicken, Chhole (Chick Peas) and Nan (Indian Bread); Watermelon and Ice Cream; Soda, Lemonade, Iced Tea, and Beer. Absolutely No Doggie Bags.

### COST PER PERSON:

Member Cost .....\$7.00  
Member's Child (Ages 3-11) .....\$4.00  
Agency Fee Cost .....\$28.00  
Child (Ages 3-11) .....\$16.00  
Child (Under 3) ..... FREE

To purchase tickets or for more information, please call the Local at 1-800-882-1032

TICKET PURCHASE DEADLINE: Wednesday, June 8th, 2005

# Around the Local



Members of the Ewing Bargaining Team review the new contract. Clockwise from top: Luke Curran, Bev Dey, Gloria Germain, Betty Verdejo (Sr. Staff Rep.), Wes Wykoff, and Nancy Buck.

## Ewing Township Members Ratify New 4-year Agreement

On February 4, 2005, the membership voted overwhelmingly to accept a new 4-year agreement. The contract improvements include increases in longevity, dental, and uniform/boot allowance. Furthermore, in addition to increasing the optical payment, the coverage is now annual, not every 2 years as in the past. If both husband and wife are employed by the Township, instead of each having a hospitalization plan, they will select 1 plan and receive one-half the value of the plan not chosen.

The following minimum/entrance salaries were established retroactive to July 1, 2004: Fire Protection Sub-Code Official, \$35,588; Radio Dispatcher, \$23,000; Public Safety Telecommunicators, \$32,000; and \$22,000 for all other employees. Any employee below the new minimum salary for her/his job title will have her/his salary increased to the new rate retroactive to July 1, 2004. This will mean a wage increase of several thousand dollars for some employees. All other employees will receive an across-the-board wage increase of 4% retroactive to July 1, 2004. Beginning July 1, 2005, all employees shall receive an annual across-the-board increase of 4% on July 1 of each year.

The Bargaining Team consisted of: Bev Dey, Gloria Germain, Nancy Buck, Wes Wykoff, and Luke Curran. Negotiations were very difficult, but the Committee stuck together and did a great job in representing the membership. They are to be congratulated. □

## East Windsor Membership Ratifies New 2-year Agreement

Members in East Windsor overwhelmingly ratified a new 2-year agreement on March 15, 2004. The previous contract expired on December 31, 2003, but negotiations for a successor had begun four months prior. However, management canceled several

negotiating sessions and they rejected all of our proposals for wage increases and other contract improvements. The Township's agenda was to limit its financial responsibility for health-care coverage while passing on the cost to members.

In October 2004, the Township manager left resulting in further delays. A new manager was hired and negotiations resumed in December 2004. The Township proposed a two-year agreement and dropped its proposal regarding financial responsibility for health care coverage clearing the way for a settlement. The new contract includes a 3% across-the-board increase for all employees retroactive to January 1, 2004 and a 3% across-the-board increase retroactive to January 1, 2005. In addition, there is a 1% increment on January 1, 2005 for each employee not at the top of his or her range. The contract also calls for a 4% increase in longevity in each year as well as increases in reimbursement for vision, travel expenses, and uniforms.

The bargaining committee consisted of stewards Lorna Bonorand and Susan Malec, together with Senior Staff Representative Betty Verdejo. Lorna and Susan did a fantastic job of standing up to management and representing the interests of the bargaining unit. Member support for the stewards was a major factor in reaching this settlement. □

## Washington Borough Contract Settled

It took a long time but the contract between Washington Borough and CWA Local 1032 is finally settled. Negotiations began in November of 2003 and continued until February 2005 when a tentative settlement was finally reached. Political upheaval and a change in Administrators complicated the lengthy negotiations. The settlement provides for increases totaling over 19% over five years as well as other significant improvements. The members approved the contract by a unanimous vote on February 23. □

## New Contract Approved at Mercer County Superintendent of Elections

After more than a year of negotiations, workers at the Mercer County Superintendent of Elections voted unanimously to approve a new contract, effective retroactive to January 1, 2004. Although negotiations began in fall 2003, a change in the County administration resulted in an unexpected delay. Negotiations resumed in earnest after the transition and the bargaining team was able to secure improvements in many areas, including: Upgrades for Supervisors and Voting Machine Technicians; a guaranteed 2-hours overtime (minimum) for employees assigned to off-site demonstrations/registrations outside of normal work hours; and improvements in vacation, mileage reimbursement, and the grievance procedure, as well as other areas. In addition,

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the settlement provides for wage increases of 3% on January 1, 2004, 3% on January 1, 2005, 3.75% on January 1, 2006, and 3.75% on January 1, 2007. Beginning this year, step increases will be effective on April 1 of each year for those employees not at the maximum.

According to Shop Steward Bob Gray, although the contract is settled, there are still many issues that the Union is working on. "We're very happy that this contract has been settled. It took too long and was at times very frustrating, but it's a fair deal and now we have to turn our attention to other areas of concern. We've got a number of questions about pending promotions, people working out-of-title, and other general staffing issues. We've got to work hard to make sure that management abides by the contract and everyone's rights are protected. And we've got to continue to build union solidarity on the job."

In addition to Bob Gray, the bargaining team included Gwen Knott and Monica Daddio. The contract expires on December 31, 2007. □

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## UPDATE: Effort to Organize Higher Level Supervisors and Professionals Moves Forward

As we reported in the last issue of *On The Move*, CWA has been actively involved in an effort to organize exempt state employees into one of the existing executive branch bargaining units. For years, the Union has argued that these positions have been improperly classified by the State as "managerial."

An ill-conceived representation petition filed at PERC by the Public Sector Managers Association (PSMA) temporarily delayed our efforts. PSMA's petition sought to establish new, even higher level, supervisory bargaining units, but CWA and the state have opposed the effort. The hearing process at PERC would likely take years, thereby further delaying CWA's efforts.

However, legislation recently introduced in the State Legislature would make the PSMA petition moot and put our efforts back on track. A-3816 (Sires/Malone) and S-2235 (Vitale) establishes the current ten executive branch bargaining units, including CWA's administrative/clerical, professional, primary level supervisory and higher level supervisory bargaining units, as the only bargaining units allowed in the state executive branch.

The Assembly bill passed 77-0 on March 14. The Senate version was voted out of the State Government Committee and is awaiting a vote by the full Senate. □

## WAKE UP!! *cont. from page 3*

Beaver specifically pointed to the 9% increase in regular pension benefits (\$4.2 billion), the 9% increase in veteran's pension benefits (\$509 million) and the last early retirement buyout (\$645 million) as making up the majority of the new costs. Little reported was Beaver's mention of the \$5.5 billion that state and local employers owed but did not pay the pension funds since 1997. Interestingly enough, those unpaid contributions by the employers (plus the interest if they had been made and invested) would have covered the cost of the pension benefit increases and early retirement buyout. The remaining \$3.5 billion in un-funded liabilities were for legislative pension projects (reducing local government pension payments, increasing pension benefits for police, fire and public safety officers and adding workers' comp judges to the pension plans without paying for it) and the cost of Governor Whitman's pension bond repayment (\$2.8 billion).

If the pension funds are in trouble, it is because the policy makers have treated the funds as slush funds to plug the holes in their budgets because they don't have the political will to tell the citizens of New Jersey that they must raise taxes or cut government programs. In government as everywhere else, there is no free ride. They can defer the costs for a few years (or decades), but sooner or later the bill comes due. For years, the policy makers chose not to look at accumulating pension liabilities and instead, relied on quick killings in the stock market to make up for the costs of promised benefits. The market crash of 2001 proved that strategy to be bankrupt.

It is unjust for the policy makers to beat the drum of reducing state and local government worker benefits now that the chickens have come home to roost. Public workers have worked a lifetime at modest wages because of the promise of a decent pension on retirement. These proposals to cut health and/or pension benefits must be fought with all resources at our disposal. Our main resources are our members. Start calling your legislators and be ready for mobilization efforts if the push to reduce your benefits becomes a reality.

Visit [www.cwalocal1032.org](http://www.cwalocal1032.org) to find contact information for your state representatives and to sign a petition to protect Social Security from the corrupt Bush plan. □



*A protester welcomes George Bush to New Jersey on March 11.*  
Photo by: Matt Lowell Thompson

**CWA LOCAL 1032**

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# **Local 1032 General Membership Meeting**

**Thursday, April 21, 2005**

6:00 P.M. - Dinner

6:30 P.M. - Meeting

**La Neve's Restaurant**

276 Belmont Avenue, Haledon, New Jersey 07508

Updates on Social Security, Pension Investments, Organizing Campaigns, and much more!

*Call the Local Office if You Need Directions*

Please call the Local office by April 18, 2005 if you plan to attend.  
Dinner Options: Prime Rib, Chicken Francese, Salmon, or Vegetarian

**CWA Local 1032: 1-800-882-1032**

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