

# The Chief

Civil Service LEADER

THE CIVIL EMPLOYEES' WEEKLY

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May 1, 2009

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## State Unions' No-Layoff Case Made At City Hall Won't Reopen Wage Deals

By TOMMY HALLISSEY



The Chief-Leader/Pat Arnow

**'WE'RE NOT THE UNREASONABLE ONES':** Public Employees Federation Manhattan Regional Coordinator Vernetta Chesimard says the union has sought to discuss alternatives to the possibility of mass layoffs 'but the Governor will not negotiate.' Looking on at left is Civil Service Employees Association Metropolitan Region President George Boncoraglio.

"lockstep" with Mr. Paterson, during this time of crisis. "When they want money for their campaigns, they all run to us," he said. "Now they are all running like rats."

Public Employees Federation Manhattan Regional Coordinator Vernetta Chesimard said her union has done all it can. "We want everyone to know that PEF has been willing to negotiate, but the Governor will not negotiate," she said.

Ms. Chesimard said employees have complained that management has urged them in meetings to talk to their unions about accepting the Governor's demands. "They're using scare tactics," she said at the protest. "That's absolutely improper for the management to tell my members to call me."

### 'It's Union-Busting'

She said the prodding has been entirely verbal, but still violates labor law. "We are sticking together because all the unions recognize this is unionbusting," Ms. Chesimard said.

PEF Brooklyn Regional Coordinator Jemma Marie Hanson said, "It's time for us to fight for what's right. We have a President fighting to stimulate the economy. Guess what? We have a Governor who doesn't want to stimulate the economy."

Mr. Boncoraglio noted that the unions understand that the state is facing an economic crisis but there are other cuts that could be made without layoffs. He suggested the Governor and state legislators cut their pork projects consistent with what state employees are being asked to do.

The state's Taylor Law forbids the unions from striking unless there is extreme provocation by the state. "Layoffs, that's extreme, but it's not enough to meet the criteria, because the bar for 'extreme provocation' is way up here and it is very hard to reach," Mr. Boncoraglio said. "For all practical purposes you can't withhold your labor."

As the July 1 deadline for layoffs approaches, however, talks with Mr. Paterson have gone nowhere. Asked for the latest on the negotiations, Mr. Boncoraglio replied, "Nothing. There's

The steps of City Hall were filled with members of the two largest state employee unions April 22 as they protested Governor Paterson's threat of up to 8,700 state layoffs.

Civil Service Employees Association Metropolitan Region President George Boncoraglio brought copies of the contract to the protest to illustrate the point that his union would not reopen its wage deal. Mr Paterson had asked unions to save the state \$481 million by rolling back a three-percent raise to avert layoffs as part of the closing of a \$17.7-billion budget gap.


### 'What About Those Zeroes?'

"When we had four zeroes in our contracts for four years, the Governor didn't say, let's open the contracts," Mr. Boncoraglio told the crowd.

He said his union would take notice of the actions of legislators, who he has said have walked in



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