

Local 237, Ex-Council Speaker In Push to Pass Women's Equality Act

By DAN ROSENBLUM | Posted: Monday, October 6, 2014 5:30 pm

Citing a recent agreement to settle a gender-pay lawsuit brought by its members against the city as an example of an incremental victory for income equality between the sexes, Teamsters Local 237 President Gregory Floyd joined former City Council Speaker Christine Quinn to gather political support for a long-stalled equal-rights bill.

A press conference, held Oct. 1 at Local 237's offices, included women's-equality advocates, Local 237 members and backers of the Women's Equality Party, launched in July by Governor Cuomo and led by Ms. Quinn.

Deal Awaits Judge's OK

In August, the city agreed to settle a four-year-old lawsuit brought by 5,000 School Safety Agents over a \$7,000 wage gap between the mostly female workforce and mostly male peace officers in other titles represented by the union. A Judge still needs to formally approve the settlement.

Last year, Ms. Quinn joined the other Democratic mayoral candidates, including Bill de Blasio, in urging the city to settle the lawsuit. She praised the outcome, but said there was a larger battle to fight.

"Not every worker is in a union," she said. "Not every female worker has the ability to bring a Federal lawsuit."

In New York State, women working full-time earn a \$42,113 average annual salary compared to men, who earn \$50,388, according to Mr. Cuomo's office.

Referring to Mr. Floyd, whom she called "one of the leading feminists in the labor movement," Ms. Quinn said that, "When you leave here and buy lunch, if the sandwich says \$3 on it, they're



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Teamsters Local 237 President Gregory Floyd said that because of a recent pay-equity settlement agreement between 5,000 School Safety Agents and the city, "Our story has a happy ending. But for so many women in this nation, their stories do not." Former City Council Speaker Christine Quinn, standing to his left, is now leading the Governor Cuomo-backed Women's Equality Party and urged candidates for statewide offices to sign a pledge to endorse a bill targeting gender discrimination.

not going to make Greg pay \$3 and make me pay less because I'm getting paid less as a woman than Greg is as a man."

'Not All Happy Endings'

"Since 2010, when we fought to end this injustice, our story has a happy ending," Mr. Floyd said. "But for so many women in this nation, their stories do not."

He said Mr. Cuomo, whom the local has endorsed, asked him to host last week's press conference.

The pay-equity clause is one part of the 10-point Women's Equality Act, backed by the Governor. Among the provisions of the law are mandates that employers use a factor other than sex to justify pay differentials, strengthen protections against sexual harassment, add protections for pregnant women seeking jobs and, controversially among some state legislators, codify abortion protections. Supporters say New York's laws don't align with the Federal rules established under *Roe v. Wade*.

Opposition to those protections stalled the bill at the end of the State Legislature's session in June, for the second straight year. Ms. Quinn said the bill's opponents were "hiding behind" that single issue to obfuscate their larger opposition to the proposed law. But, she said, the abortion component should stay in the legislation.

"This bill's not going to be chopped up into little pieces and given out like crumbs or little biscuits that we should jump up and down and be happy about and wag our tails for," she said.

Takes Shot At GOP

The former Council Speaker said every candidate running for state office should sign a pledge supporting the act. She wielded it to whack at Mr. Cuomo's Republican opponent in next month's election, Westchester County Executive Rob Astorino. Ms. Quinn said, she hasn't heard from Mr. Astorino's campaign and that no Republican candidates have signed the pledge.

Asked why many of the candidates running on the Women's Equality Party line, including Mr. Cuomo and State Attorney General Eric Schneiderman, were men, Ms. Quinn said it was because they cared about women's issues.

"They're part of this because they want the world to be a better place for their daughters," she said. "[Lieutenant Governor candidate] Kathy Hochul wants this world to be a better place for her children. When we get 50,000 votes and we're an official party, then we'll have the ability to have more candidates on the line."

Referring to the SSA settlement, Public Advocate Letitia James called it "sweet, sweet justice" adding that wages were even lower for women who are Latino, African-American and single

parents.

SSA Kangelia Moore, a 22-year veteran who has become the face of the pay dispute, said she felt “cheated” by the lower salary.

“The sacrifices that myself and the other 5,000 School Safety Agents made were tremendous,” she said, and added the Women’s Equality Party would help ensure those disparities no longer occur.