



It's time to act

New York State's low wage workers -- the super exploited -- need better wages and working conditions

In July, Governor Cuomo [announced](#) formation of a state-wide Task Force to “root out worker exploitation issues” across the state. It includes 10 government agencies. There also is an Advisory Committee of representatives from community groups, unions and employers. They are to make recommendations by December, 2015 about improving life for workers in these jobs:

- Car washes
- Childcare
- Cleaning
- Construction
- Farming
- Home health care
- Janitorial services
- Landscaping
- Laundry
- Nail salons
- Restaurants
- Retail
- Supermarkets
- Truck and waste disposal drivers

What can you or your organization do?

- 1. Tell Advisory Committee members what you think needs to be done to prevent wage theft, and improve other working conditions for super-exploited workers.** The Committee members are:

Stuart Appelbaum, President, RWDSU
Esta Bigler, Director, Labor and Employment Law Programs, Cornell University, NYSSILR
Steve Choi, Executive Director, New York Immigration Coalition
Anne Erickson, President and CEO, Empire Justice Center
Héctor Figueroa, President, SEIU 32BJ
George Gresham, President, 1199SEIU
Gary LaBarbera, President, Building and Construction Trades Council of Greater New York
Donna Lieberman, Executive Director, New York Civil Liberties Union
Dean Norton, President, New York Farm Bureau

Lewis Papenfuse, Executive Director, Worker Justice Center of New York
Ted Potrikus, President and CEO, Retail Council of New York State
Javier Valdés/Deborah Axt, Co-Executive Directors, Make the Road New York
Peter Ward, President, Hotel & Motel Trades Council, AFL-CIO
Danny Wegman, Chairman and CEO, Wegmans
Kathryn Wylde, President and CEO, Partnership for New York City

Send your ideas, recommendations and comments to Lewis Papenfuse (lpapenfuse@wjcnyc.org). He will pass them along to other Advisory Committee members.

2. Join the Occupational Health Clinical Center to make links between unhealthy and unsafe jobs, wage theft and other working conditions

The Occupational Health Clinical Center in Syracuse has done a variety of work with and for low wage workers, including temps. Our latest effort is the report, *Healthy work in Syracuse? Conversations with low-wage workers*. (Check our website for a copy.)

We'll use what we've learned to write a document that sets the context, contains workers' stories (especially about health and

safety hazards) and makes short and long-term recommendations for meaningful and needed changes. **We need your help to do that.**

Have stories about low wage workers' experiences with unsafe or unhealthy jobs? Ideas about what needs to be done to stop that happening? Want to get your voice into our presentation and recommendations?

The Clinic's Dorothy Wigmore (wigmored@upstate.edu, 315-432-8899 x 127) will take your contributions or help write up your stories and ideas. We'd also be happy to add your organization's name to the recommendations that we'll share with you.

3. Share information, photos and graphics for allies, the Advisory Committee and others to use

Dorothy Wigmore (wigmored@upstate.edu) will co-ordinate setting up and using an on-line place for background resources.

It will be for materials to share with allies, the Advisory Committee, the Task Force (i.e., government departments), and decision-makers. There will be sub-folders for studies, reports, graphics, stories, and miscellaneous materials.

4. Work together to follow up on all our collective recommendations

It's not enough to tell the stories of low wage workers' life on the job and make recommendations about necessary changes.

We all need to follow up to make sure the Task Force, Advisory Committee and decision-makers "get" what needs to be done to really prevent and end worker exploitation.

We need to push for short and long-term solutions, not just what is convenient at the moment. They include:

- ✓ recognizing and dealing with systemic barriers ;

- ✓ how to better enforce current laws, regulations and policies;
- ✓ penalties against employers who violate the rules (and how to use that money);
- ✓ new regulations and legislation to prevent employers from exploiting workers; and
- ✓ how existing resources -- the organizations that represent and/or work with super-exploited workers -- can be supported to do and accomplish more, especially Upstate.

This will be most effective if we collaborate -- whether our focus is on health and safety, wages, or other working conditions. It's time to connect these issues that really are all about equality, fairness and justice on the job. In that spirit, we look forward to working with you.

Rebecca Fuentes

Lead organizer

Workers' Center of Central New York
Syracuse

Michael Lax

Medical Director

Occupational Health Clinical Centers
Syracuse, Canton, Binghamton

Lew Papenfuse

Executive Director

Worker Justice Center of New York
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