

Main Street News Fall 2003

Holiday Message from President Marty Latko...

Dear Sisters and Brothers:

From the entire Executive Board and myself, we wish you and your families a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. 2003 has been hectic to say the least. Between our incredibly busy arbitration schedule and negotiations, I have not had the time to get out and personally see each and every member. Hopefully your Business Agent and/or Shop Steward is a presence in your work unit that you can rely on and utilize, if necessary.

Negotiations are proceeding. We have had several meetings and are scheduled to meet next in January. The first few meetings focused more on housekeeping and non-substantive issues. We are now dealing with more important items and proposals. As always, we will update you as the process moves along. This Board's goal is to negotiate a fair and equitable contract for its members. Such negotiations often take time and we ask for your support during the process.

The Union's arbitration schedule is as busy as ever. We have many grievances filed in each division and most are going to arbitration. In the Buffalo Division alone, we have about thirteen arbitrations on filling full-time toll collector vacancies. In the New York Division, there are multiple grievances filed on overtime and out-of-title issues. If you have questions about a grievance, please contact your Business Agent. Also, in the newsletter is a schedule of grievances that were filed for arbitration.

I take extreme pride and pleasure in saying that it is our Local's 25th Anniversary. Although this Union's history includes some very trying times, we are on the right track of unifying our members in support of the Union. I can honestly say that we are one Union, one Board, with one purpose. In honor of our anniversary, the Board has purchased Local 72 pins and day-planners for each of the members. Your Union representative will be distributing these items shortly.

One of the obvious by-products of understaffing our overworked work units is that tension and stress have never been higher. Apparently, the bean counters in Albany who spent millions of dollars to formulate the conclusion that doing more with less increases profits did not account for the emotional impact such a policy would have on the workers. They should have. Workplace violence is a serious issue that may lead to suspension and/or termination. Workplace violence may include affirmative actions or, on occasion, even statements. If you feel stressed out or on edge, there are services available to you. Immediately consult either your Union representative or myself if you have any questions. If possible, speak to us prior to speaking to your supervisor. Although most supervisors are sympathetic and helpful, some are not. Recently we had an issue where two identical incidents were handled differently. One incident never left the work unit and was resolved locally. The other incident is now pending possible disciplinary action. It is a shame that we cannot even have consistency when addressing identical issues in the same work unit.

Make sure your CDL is current. We have had multiple situations recently where individuals' CDL licenses had expired. The Authority routinely checks and working without a license or with an expired license will cost you, regardless of the reason.

Recently, many of the drug companies' patents expired. As a result, many drugs that were name-brand only now offer a comparable generic. This change directly affects the Welfare Fund and your prescription plan.

The prescription plan's policy on generic drugs is as follows: when a generic drug is available, it must be utilized. If you choose to still use the name-brand drug, you will pay the co-pay plus the difference in cost between the name-brand and generic-brand. This policy has been in effect ever since I can remember and is an important mechanism in controlling the rapidly increasing cost of prescription drugs. Please consult a health care professional if you have any questions about the difference between a particular name-brand versus the generic-brand.

Again, we wish you a Happy Holiday season. The Board as well as the shop stewards are here to serve you. Please contact us if you need anything. As a reminder, membership meetings are the single best way to speak to the Board and voice your concerns. Agreement and praise are always nice, but true unity and strength is obtained from voicing and addressing real issues. We hope to see all of you at one of the meetings. Food and beverages are always served. Also, we provide a comprehensive negotiations and grievance update at every meeting.

Fraternally yours,

MARTIN A. LATKO

A Little Labor History.....

By Terry Eldridge, Local 72 Secretary-Treasurer

Recently, I was behind a car displaying a bumper sticker that read, "Unions, The People Who Brought You The Weekend." Well, just think about it. Unions have earned workers more than weekends. Unions also have earned the American workers, in addition to higher wages, a shorter workday, a shorter workweek, safer working conditions, health benefits, overtime pay, and the right to union representation when being disciplined.

Unfortunately, since big business corporations were (and continue to be) greedy about their profits, most of these benefits were earned through strikes and the cost of human life.

Strikes have played a significant role in the economic, political and social life of the United States throughout its history. From the early strikes by shoemakers, printers, bakers, and other trades in the era of the American Revolution, to the bitter airline comptrollers strikes two centuries later, workers have repeatedly tried to defend or improve their living and working conditions by collectively refusing to work until specific demands were met.

The United States has had the bloodiest labor history of any industrial nation. The first strike fatalities were two New York City tailors, killed in 1850 by police dispersing a crowd of strikers. Since then well over 700 people, mostly strikers, have died in strike-related violence. Some died in famous incidents, such as the Ludlow Massacre, when National Guardsmen attacked a tent colony of striking Colorado miners; or the 1937 Memorial Day Massacre, when 10 supporters of a steel strike were killed by Chicago police. Most strikers, however, died in little-noted confrontations with company guards, private detectives, scabs or police.

Wage disputes have been the single most common cause of strikes. Workers have walked off jobs for many reasons, including efforts to win union recognition, shorten the workday, gain or defend control over the work process, improve working conditions, or to protest the disciplining of union members.

The following are some of the more notable labor strikes in America:

The Great Strike, 1877

In the era of industrial growth following the Civil War, the most powerful of the big business corporations were the railroad companies. In order to protect their profits during the economic depression that began in 1873, the companies reduced the pay of railroad workers by ten percent.

In 1877, they announced another ten- percent reduction in the workers' pay. They also required that railroad employees would be required to use company hotels when away from home, which meant a further reduction in real wages. And, in addition, they reduced the workforce which meant unemployment for some and increased labor duties for those remaining.

As a result, on July 16, 1877, a spontaneous strike erupted in Martinsburg, West Virginia and quickly spread to cities from St. Louis and Chicago to New York and Baltimore, hitting Pittsburgh on July 19.

To "keep the peace" and break the strike, state militia units from Philadelphia were ordered to Pittsburgh. (Militias from Pittsburgh sympathized with the strikers, and therefore, were deemed unreliable.) On July 21, 600 troops arrived from Philadelphia, led by Superintendent Robert Pitcairn of the Pennsylvania Railroad and a posse of constables with arrest warrants for the strike leaders. They found themselves met by crowds of men, women and children. The crowds, loudly protesting the troops' presence and expressing support for the strikers, sought to prevent military action. The militiamen respond with a bayonet charge that resulted in injuries and provoked a hail of rocks from those assembled. The troops then opened fire on unarmed men, women and children, scattering them and leaving at least 20 dead (including one woman and three small children) and 29 wounded.

Workers from other cities and towns in Pennsylvania joined in the strikes, rallies and meetings supporting the strike. Mass demonstrations, general strikes and sometimes violent confrontations rocked cities in many other states as well, but none exceeded the violence of the Pittsburgh battles.

On July 26, regular troops of the U.S. Army joined with the state militia units to take control of the city and open all railroad operations in Pittsburgh and Allegheny City. The strike was systematically broken throughout the country by the end of July. This was the first time in U.S. history that federal troops were utilized against strikers and labor protesters.

Haymarket Riot, 1886

Workers at the McCormick Reaper Manufacturing Company were asking for an 8-hour day. A one-day strike was planned on May 1, 1886 in support of the 8-hour day. Six strikers were killed at the McCormick plant after police fired into the crowd who had attacked the strikebreakers.

On May 14, over 1,400 participated in a meeting held at Haymarket Square (called by the Knights of Labor). Numerous other unions and international anarchists protested at this meeting over the use of police force to disperse strikers. At 10:00 pm, when 180 police arrived to order the crowd out, a bomb was thrown into

their midst, killing 7, and wounding at least 60 others. It was assumed that an anarchist threw the bomb and police raids were conducted on all known union leaders and radical groups.

Judge Joseph E. Gary presided over the trial of Samuel Fielden (speaking when the bomb was thrown), August Spies, Albert Parsons, Michael Schwab, Adolph Fisher, George Engel, and Oscar Neebe, who were charged with conspiring to kill.

Although no evidence linked specific persons to the incident, the prosecution focused on their radical beliefs, union involvement and advocacy of violence to achieve goals. The political trial resulted in 7 convictions (the 8th hanged himself in his cell). Four were sentenced to death (Spies, Parsons, Fisher and Engel), two to life in prison (Fielden and Schwab), and one to 15 years in prison (Neebe).

They were found guilty on the grounds that it is not necessary to plan a murder for members of a conspiracy to be murders of accessories before the fact. As a result, anti-radical and anti-union feelings swept the American public mind; and these feelings continue, somewhat, to present day especially by big business advocates and corporate management.

For more information about the Haymarket Memorial go to: www.kentlaw.edu/iths/haymkmon.htm

Pullman Strike, 1894

George Pullman of the Pullman Palace Car Company, had established a model town for his workers near Chicago. It promoted a clean, healthy atmosphere, thereby giving Pullman a public image as a benevolent, paternalistic industrial leader.

The economic panic of 1893, caused a wage cut of one-third for Pullman workers, but no lower rent on company housing or price reduction at company stores. When Pullman fired a suspected union organizer, an ugly strike began.

Eugene Debs, a leader of the American Railway Union (ARU), aided the strikers by refusing to handle Pullman cars on the railroads, and encouraged other unions to join in this endeavor.

The strike was ended by a court injunction, based on the Sherman Anti-Trust Act, after which President Grover Cleveland sent in 10,000 federal troops (because of "interference" with the U.S. mail), and who along with 2,000 state troops smashed the ARU.

Today, one cannot help seeing a similarity in the treatment of workers and unions by big business corporations and top management. It appears that they want to take more and more benefits away (i.e. overtime pay, medical benefits) and demand more and more work from their employees with little or no compensation. That is why it is important to get involved in your union, and to support only those politicians who defend workers' rights. We cannot let the hard work and sacrifices of these strikers to have been in vain.

LONG SLEEVE vs SHORT SLEEVE

By Trustee Gerry Flint

It's time once again for Toll Collectors to start wearing long sleeve shirts. As you know, October and April are transition months in which you can wear either a long or a short sleeve shirt. The months of November through March are months in which it is mandatory that you wear a long sleeve shirt.

To this I ask, "WHY?"

At one time, the collector had the option of wearing either a long or short sleeve shirt in the winter months. Now one does not have that option any more. If an employee is more comfortable wearing a short sleeve shirt in the winter months, why shouldn't he or she be able to wear one? Whether you are wearing a long or short sleeve shirt, *you still do your job the same way; you still treat your customers in a polite and courteous manner.*

This being the case, then one would think that the collector should have the option of wearing his or her choice of sleeve length.

Are Toll Collectors Really Caged Animals?

Should The New York State Thruway Authority Let The Public & Media Refer To Us As Such?

Dear MSN:

The answer to both of these questions is NO! And, our employer, the NYS Thruway Authority, should be defending us 100% whether it is on the radio, the television or in a letter addressed to the public.

As a kid growing up I was always told, "One bad apple doesn't spoil the whole bunch" - but I guess my parents were wrong. Both the Thruway Authority and the public look at it quite differently; one rude collector at a station and Wham! The entire staff is rude. Well, I say "Shame on them." Last I knew, Toll Collectors were people. They have feelings, they have families, lives and - guess what - they bleed too!

The Media couldn't have picked a better time to really bash the Thruway Collectors. We are right in the middle of Contract Negotiations and with the bad publicity, you know the Thruway will take that and run to the table with it. Poor Marty Latko, he will definitely have a fight! (Marty is the President of Teamsters, Local 72, which represents the Clerical, Maintenance and the "Caged Animals" of the NYS Thruway Authority).

I just got done reading and laughing at the Patron Complaints on www.TheSmokingGun.com website. It is a shame that some of the Collectors may swear and be downright rude, but that is only a very small percentage. Most of us do treat the patrons with the respect they are entitled to, even when the patron has an attitude and is extremely rude to us. Even though it kills us, we greet them and have to listen to an onslaught of insults, comments and the like. No one told me when I started this job that if it rains or snows, it is the collector's fault. A serious accident with fatalities? Collector's fault. The patron has written directions, a map, yet they still get lost? Collector's fault. What recourse do we have? Most supervisors are too busy talking to their spouses, kids or friends on the Thruway telephone to care or listen to us when we complain about the treatment we receive from these patrons. Maybe we should go to the newspapers and complain to them and include all of them, not just the guilty ones. This is what seems to be happening to us. One or two "bad" collectors and we are all guilty.

I think what we should do is have Tom Fitzgerald, Bill Rinaldi, Deb Haslun, Wilma DeLucco, Ramesh Mehta and Michael Fleischer join us at the following stations for a Sunday 3 shift in the lanes: Tappan Zee Bridge, Woodbury, Newburgh, Albany at #23 and #24, and Williamsville. Let them see first hand just what goes on when traffic is backed up, patrons have no money, no tickets, don't speak English and are just having a bad day! Maybe then, they can appreciate us for what we really are: overworked, underpaid and treated like "what gets scraped off the bottom of your shoe". Oh yes, invite Gov. Pataki too!

I think most of the toll collectors know their job well enough to realize that we have to take what is given to us to pay the toll by the patron; we have no problem with that. The problem is the condition in which it is given to us. The money is slimy, scummy, dirty and just plain gross. Pennies are mostly taken from the inside of their dirty ashtrays. They are so sticky and dirty that they stick together. Would anyone want to touch them? Yet, we must take them and say thank you with a smile. This is totally unfair to us; we can only imagine what is on them and where they have been. We accept pennies, but we CAN'T give them out? Why, pennies are currency, aren't they? If we can take them, we should be able to hand them out. Better yet, the Thruway should do what everyone else does "Accept No Pennies".

As for talking on the phones and to other collectors when the patron comes through, the patron should first find out if it is business before he starts mouthing off about how we are rude. There are some stations that have no supervisors, so the collector is responsible for answering the phones and radio. Does the patron know for a fact that the collector is just talking to a friend? Could be they might have a phone call from their children, maybe the collector is checking up on their kids to make sure they are all ready for school. Maybe they are answering the phone for a sick call-in, an ambulance, and/or a fire truck. Does the patron know this? No, and they don't care either.

Since when can't we talk to another collector? Is this a new ground rule? We may be giving directions to them, or answering a question about a problem they might have? The public doesn't care; they are the rude and ignorant ones, - not all the collectors.

I am hoping that someone up in Albany who has heard all the noise on the different radio stations and read the articles will come to our defense. They can start by letting the public know that the collectors are working short staffed so management can get the upgrades. The collectors are often overworked and this can be very frustrating to them. Management can defend us but they won't.

We make the money so they all get bonuses, incentives and upgrades. How do we get treated? Not the way we should that's for sure.

The New York State Thruway has little regard for its employees; it shows it in everything they do. I have never worked for an employer that didn't defend its employees, that is until now.

This article is the joint effort of many collectors to let the Thruway know how the collectors feel.

SIGNED

(Names withheld by request)

WHERE IS THE SOLIDARITY?

Response to article, "Toll Collectors Should Be Upgraded" by Colleen Caterinicchio in the Summer 2003 issue of Main Street News

Dear MSN:

Thank you for your opinion on toll collectors' inability to be upgraded. You made valid points and your fellow Teamsters would like to support you, but you make it difficult to do so. Your article makes it sound like toll collectors are the only ones on the Thruway who are being overworked. We can assure you, and your other counterparts, that you are in error if you feel you are alone and pushed "under the carpet."

In your article you pointed fingers saying "everyone" has been upgraded - MC, CSEA, and Teamsters. If that is true, why are you complaining? We cannot speak for any other unit except for the Teamsters, but there are very few of us who have been upgraded. But if you are in reference to the Section Clerks (really "office managers") who have recently been upgraded, you failed to mention that they were downgraded first. Also, there are other clerical personnel in the Teamsters that are serving as office managers too - at entry level (Grade 6). All this is redundant since the clerical employees had an article in the newsletter stating all their expanded duties, which apparently you had forgotten. It would have been a kind offering if you made an attempt to recall the article since you are a Trustee for all Teamsters. Since you failed to do some research, let us assure you that there was no finger pointing to our union brothers and sisters in the clerical article. Of course, if you did any research you would have known the people who were "upgraded" (not "promoted") and we would not have to be writing this since you would have realized that "everyone" was not upgraded.

Is it egotism that makes you feel that toll collectors alone are holding up the Thruway? You are correct that toll collectors are a vital link in the Thruway structure, but toll collectors are not the chain - they are only a link. Other vital links are those who maintain the road. What good is it to have someone in a tollbooth if the road is closed because of unplowed snow? Or what would happen to your positions if the Thruway were closed due to vehicles being unable to navigate through pavement deterioration? What would happen if the Thruway bridges became structurally unsound and had to be closed? What about something as simple as traffic lights? What would you do if traffic lights were out and no one fixed them? Guess it would become another additional duty for the toll collector to wave the drivers to the correct entry or exit lane. How about the tollbooths - where would you be if there was no one to come and fix doors, windows, and heat - pretty drafty and chilly? Without your office personnel you would be doing the Thruway a big favor because you would be there voluntarily since there would be no one to enter your hours worked and you would not be getting a paycheck. Better yet, without the personnel link you would not have been hired.

We're tired of this game. The links go on and on, but let it be known that toll collectors are not the only vital link in the Thruway chain.

In closing, we are disappointed in our Union. You being in a "Trustee" position should be aware that the Thruway loves it when Teamsters are pitted against Teamsters. Yet, you felt so strongly about your own title's grudge that you failed to look into the difficulties of your other Teamster brothers and sisters. Instead of asking for support from your union brothers and sisters, you drove a wedge between us. Shame on you and shame on the Union who authorized your article to be printed.

Signed

(Names withheld by request)

Joseph Trerotola Scholarship Winners!

The winners of the Joseph Trerotola Scholarship Award for 2004 are:

Albany Division: Christina O'Brien and Catherine Wohlberg

Buffalo Division: William Dobson, III and Kevin DelPrincipe.

New York Division: Amanda Colon and Stephen Fratello

Syracuse Division: Gary Bonner and Kyle Mennig.

Thank You Local 72

Mike Giarrusso, Chief Shop Steward, Syracuse Division

For the past two years I have wanted to write an article for MSN. This has been very hard to do because what I want to say has already been addressed and done much better than I ever could do. What I hope to point out is very obvious to me and I hope it also is obvious to all my brothers and sisters.

Four years ago our Executive Board began to move Local 72 from a reactive Union (i.e. grievances and disciplines) to a proactive Union. Many of the accomplishments have been well documented here in MSN, but I would like to point out two of the accomplishments before I get to the reasons for this article.

First, the really big thing the Executive Board did for us was to make the decision to hire our own legal counsel. In one quick step the Board leveled the arbitration playing field. Money was no longer an issue when it came to arbitrations. Then to compound this decision and make it even better, they hired Kevin Clor, Esq. as counsel. I think that Kevin Clor has proven time and again that having our own legal counsel is really worthwhile, not just in money saved but in the advice and guidance given. Anyone who has sat in on a hearing or an arbitration will tell you that he is always in front of the issue, which keeps Local 72 from having to play catch up.

Second, is the way the Board has moved us into the proactive side of organized labor by using the assets of Joint Council 16 and the International. Why has the Union done this? Let me tell you. We now talk with at least six other Unions that have the same kind of issues about safety and health, job cuts, and privatization that we have and goals, that is keeping the membership first.

Now, what has prompted all this from me is, that being proactive when I was appointed Chief Shop Steward almost four years ago, I took it upon myself to introduce Local 72 to the Central New York Labor community. In so doing, I wound up working with other labor unions doing political and labor-related work. I became a LABOR ACTIVIST, one of those nuts you see picketing for all those ultra-liberal things like job security, health care, and the right to organize. This led me to a political party that was formed by the Communication Workers of America (CWA), United Auto Workers (UAW), and the Association of

Community Organizations for Reform Now (ACORN). Their idea was to form a political party to represent the working men and women of New York to make politicians accountable for what they promise, and to promote education and other issues, like a living wage and workers' compensation. I joined them because they advocated everything that I have always felt was important. I worked on a few of their campaigns and then was elected to an office in the Central New York Labor Chapter.

I continued to walk picket lines and on one such line I was approached by some friends in labor and in the Democratic Party to run for a local office in my town. I found this to be quite funny. Since we normally do not picket, let me tell you a small problem with picket lines - they go in circles. I was trapped and four later I was down to my last argument, which was "My wife has to agree." I knew I was safe, she hates politics. I was wrong again! So, I was in my first political race where I was out front, lost and confused, but I started to get out and talk to the people who I hoped to represent and found out how much I really liked it.

When I came to Marty Latko and the Executive Board, instead of finding indifference I found unmitigated support. Remember, back at the beginning when I said they have made us a proactive Union? Everyone knows a campaign runs on money and the Board stepped up to the plate and nailed one. They could have stopped there and I would still be writing this article, but they didn't and three days later I got a call from Carl DiPietro who is the Eastern State Legislative Coordinator and he asked, "Mike, what can we do to help your campaign?" Really, how would I know since all this was new to me. "No problem, I'll have the International give you a call." Then I got a call from Tony Fiore, Eastern State Political Coordinator, and from there on anything I needed, as far as support and ideas was available.

Well, with all this help and the help of several Central New York Labor Unions I won the election. I beat the incumbent by 10 percentage points. They tell me this is a big deal - I don't know about that, but it sure feels great.

So, what started out as a small thank you to President Latko and the Board for their help on my campaign, turned into a big thank you for taking my Union to a whole new level.

We are never going to make labor's voice heard at the state and federal levels unless we get involved on the local level.

ONE UNION!

Dear MSN:

I've been working for the Thruway for just over 10 years in New York Division Highway.

From day one, I've heard a lot about maintenance workers and toll collectors and their differences in opinion. One side claims if we don't collect the money, you won't get paid. The other side claims that if the roads are not maintained and not plowed, there will be no patrons thus, no tolls will be collected.

My thought on this matter was that we are all Teamsters working on the same road, working for the same cause.

However, I also felt that the old Board wanted tolls and maintenance not to get along. Finally, when the new Board was voted in I personally felt things would be different - that we would come together as one strong Union and that this was going to be a step forward.

This Board has made a lot of strides forward. Workers are regaining respect and now have pride in our Union - we have our own newspaper and website.

Now this is where my problem begins - specifically in the newspaper, Vol. 3 No. 2 (Summer 2003 issue). I was reading it like always (since it came out) and on page 4 in big bold print was "Should Toll Collectors Be Upgraded?" I started to read on and by the second paragraph I started to get that old feeling again. Ms. Catterinicchio, our union Trustee, wrote about toll collectors not getting a fair share. This may be true, but guess what? We all aren't getting a fair share. Here, in our own union newspaper, one of our Trustees is comparing maintenance and tolls and making statements like, "Everyone is making more money than collectors" and "Tolls are eyes and ears for the Thruway." Believe me you are not the only ones. What do you mean by, "Face it, without the help of collectors the road would be in sorry shape." When I'm digging 5-foot holes by hand, I don't see you next to me digging the other one.

I am sure we could go back and forth with who does more, but that is neither here nor there. At this time of contract talks and rebuilding our Union, I can't help but wonder if you are there for one reason with comments like that in your article.

Just remember one very important thing - you were elected in your position and you represent the union and all its members, not just tolls.

All Thruway workers have it rough dealing with different elements on the road. So, the next time you speak on raises, speak for everyone, not just one department.

SIGNED

NY Div. Highway CEOL

(Name withheld by request)

Manager's Attitude Carries Over To Job Field

Recently a group of Thruway employees attended a retirement party. In attendance were several managers and their spouses. One manager in particular made it a point of introducing his wife to all employees in attendance with the exception of five employees, one employee's spouse and one former employee. To me this person showed a bias by his lack of manners and lack of professionalism.

This attitude of his is carried into the job field as well. There have been numerous occasions where certain things are acceptable for some employees, but when a few other select employees are involved the answer is a big NO!

This is what happens in my division. Does it happen in the others? To the union officers: can anything be done about on the job bias and personal discrimination?

(Name withheld by Request)

Reprinted from the Buffalo newspaper, "Buffalo News" 10/06/03

Fleischer On Tolls

The News and certain elected officials have raised questions regarding Thruway tolls and the Thruway's commitment to the Buffalo area.

It is important to point out that the New York State Thruway receives no state tax dollars. Thus, toll revenues are used to pay for maintenance, repairs and traffic-flow improvements on the Thruway, which helps make it one of the safest highways in the nation.

Today, nearly 40 percent of all Thruway toll revenue comes from out-of-state motorists. If tolls were eliminated, millions of New Yorkers would have to pay higher taxes to replace that revenue. Meanwhile, out-of-state motorists would receive what essentially amounts to a free ride.

Tolls have funded \$250 million worth of Thruway improvements in Western New York over the past 15 years, including the recently completed \$62.5 million fourth-lane widening project between interchanges 53 and 54 in West Seneca. In addition, the authority is helping fund the Buffalo inner harbor project and new canalside recreational trails from Tonawanda to Lockport - all without levying taxes.

In the future, customers in Western New York will see more improvements on Thruway facilities, including higher-speed E-ZPass lanes, congestion relief at the Williamsville toll barrier, improvements at the Exit 50 interchange and I-290, steel and concrete repairs to the Grand Island Bridges and other critical safety and capital improvements that will make their travel smoother and safer.

The media have reported that Buffalo commuters are the only New York State Thruway users who must pay tolls to get to work. That is incorrect. Millions of commuters in Albany, Syracuse, Schenectady and New York City pay tolls to use the Thruway for their commuting needs.

We believe tolls are a much fairer system in which individuals who use the Thruway pay for it, instead of burdening New York residents with additional taxes.

MICHAEL R. FLEISCHER

Executive Director, New York State Thruway Authority

IF YOU RECENTLY HAVE MOVED...

IMPORTANT: If You Recently Have Moved...

Members are reminded that if they have moved recently to please make sure to update their change of address with the Union and the NYS Thruway Authority.

To notify the union, you can go to www.local72.org and click on the Forms page and download the change of address form, fill it out and mail to the union or contact the NY office directly at (212) 691-4228.

To notify the NYS Thruway Authority, please contact the personnel department.

The Authority routinely checks and working without a license or with an expired license will cost you, regardless of the reason.