



## PRESIDENT'S CORNER

*By Rowena Blackman-Stroud*

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Colleagues,

Happy Labor Day. Enjoy your Holiday weekend. Labor Day is a day each year where working Americans get to take a well-earned break.

We march in parades, we go to picnics and barbecues, we relax, we spend time with our families and we honor the labor movement and the gains and sacrifices unionists over the years have made—and continue to make—to protect and expand our rights and protections on the job and as American workers.

Labor Day is a nationwide tribute to the social and economic achievement of American workers. The first Labor Day holiday in New York City was 1882. By 1894, 23 more states made Labor Day a holiday. Later that year, President Grover Cleveland made Labor Day a national holiday.

There won't be any big Labor Day parades or picnics this year. The coronavirus has seen to that.

But that won't stop us from honoring our dedicated workers here at Downstate. Our members stepped up and did their jobs as the coronavirus raged, taking the lives of hundreds of New Yorkers each day for weeks on end in the spring.

In March, Gov. Andrew Cuomo designated Downstate as a COVID-19-only hospital. That meant that only COVID-19 patients were sent to Downstate. For weeks at a time, our hospital was epicenter of coronavirus in New York State.

Our members faced shortages of personal protection equipment; some of our members were forced to wear garbage bags as gowns and put plastic bags on their shoes secured with rubber bands. UUP, battling PPE shortages, managed to obtain and deliver needed isolation gowns, N95 masks, Nitrile gloves and other items.

And now, nearly five months into the pandemic, when essential workers at private hospitals in New York City have all received hazard pay, our essential workers at the SUNY hospitals have yet to receive hazard pay for their heroic efforts.

To all our essential workers and to all UUP Downstate members, please know that your chapter leadership will do all we can to get well-deserved hazard pay for our essential workers. UUP President Fred Kowal continues to push for hazard pay and new SUNY chancellor, Jim Malatras, has said he supports hazard pay for Downstate's essential workers.

### **Telecommuting Agreement**

Many of our members continue to do their jobs during the COVID-19 pandemic from home, utilizing the negotiated telecommuting agreement – Thank you.

We will continue to push the state to extend the telecommuting agreement between SUNY and the State of New York to December 31, 2020.



### **Rally for safe communities**

On Aug. 5, more than 4,000 people watched UUP's virtual "Rally for Safe Communities." I was one of several speakers at the rally, which you can watch [HERE](#). I talked about the absolute need for adequate PPE and hazard pay for our essential workers, as well as rapid result testing for our members and the community.

I called for the state to provide added protections for our essential workers on the job. We need permanent, plexiglass barriers at all clinical workstations in the hospital. For the next wave of coronavirus, our members must have those barriers and as many layers of protection as possible. We will continue to advocate for those layers of protection.

SUNY hospitals need to do more than screen their patients, employees, students, and community. We need mandatory baseline rapid-result testing for all.

### **Downstate Re-opening Workgroup**

Please know that UUP is making its collective voice heard locally and statewide. We were successful in negotiating representation on Downstate's [Back to New Normal](#) workgroup, which is part of the campus's Coronavirus Preparedness Task Force.

Information and updates from the Back to New Normal Workgroup are available on the campus's website. Our chapter leadership has hosted governing board meetings and department rep. meetings, to provide members with an opportunity to dialogue with our representative on the Back to New Normal Workgroup – it's your opportunity to have your concerns raised. The next department

rep. meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, Sept. 9, 2020, 6:30 p.m. to 7:30 pm. Please make sure your department is represented.

### **Take Action!**

The State of New York is facing what could be a \$14 billion budget deficit due to the pandemic.

That's why we all must urge the Senate to approve the HEROES Act, the federal coronavirus aid package passed by the House of Representatives in May. This bill would provide needed financial relief to the states. You can help by sending an e-letter to your federal representatives [HERE](#).

UUP is also pushing for a new state tax on ultra-millionaires and billionaires, which will bring in hundreds of millions of dollars in new revenue to the state. These new taxes would provide new funding streams for our institution. Click [HERE](#) to tell your state representatives to approve taxes on the ultra-rich.

Finally, UUP supports legislation for an early retirement incentive, which we believe is a prudent, realistic way to raise funds while decreasing expenditures.

### **Fill out your census form**

You can also help by responding to the Census. It is important to fill out your form because the Census results help determine how billions of dollars in federal funding flow into states and communities each year. A big response to the Census from our area would bring needed revenue to Central Brooklyn, New York City and New York State.

### **Membership meeting Sept. 16**

Lastly, we want you to become involved in your union. To that end, we've scheduled a membership meeting from 6:30p.m. to 7:30 p.m. on Wednesday, September 16, 2020, Please join us and become involved. To register for this meeting click on the link:

<https://uuphost.org/myuup/Registration/WEBI-NAR/DOWNSTATE/Register.php>

## New Retiree Officer

We would like to take this opportunity to congratulate Shirley Patterson, who was elected to fill the unexpired term as the Downstate Chapter Retiree Officer. Shirley takes over for Sandy Spier, who stepped down from her Retiree Officer post on August 28, 2020.

The Governing Board, at its September 2, 2020 meeting, voted to elect Shirley Patterson to serve the balance of Sandy Spier's term ending May 31, 2021.

We would like to thank Sandy for her service and advocacy to our chapter and to UUP. She is a dedicated unionist who truly cares about UUP. We will miss her and we wish her well.

As always, please contact the Downstate Chapter office if you have questions or concerns that we can help with. We are here for you.

*Have a Happy*



## **UPCOMING EVENTS:**

Wednesday, September 16, 2020,  
6:30 pm to 7:30 pm, General membership meeting. To register for this meeting please click on the link:

<https://uuphost.org/myuup/Registration/WEBI/NAR/DOWNSTATE/Register.php>

Tuesday, September 22, 2020,  
6:30 pm to 8:30 pm Pre-Retirement Workshop - To register for the workshop please click on the link:

<https://uuphost.org/myuup/Registration/RETIR/EE/DOWNSTATE/Register.php>

Wednesday, September 23, 2020,  
12:00 Noon UUP Regional Tele-Town Hall

Friday, September 25, 2020 -  
UUP Virtual Delegate Assembly

## **UUP Downstate Chapter**

**President: Rowena Blackman-Stroud**

VP for Academics: Karen Benker  
VP for Professionals: Hazel Williams  
Secretary: Ellen McTigue  
Treasurer: Fred Houston  
Grievance Chair: Simon Abe Gerecht  
Officer for Contingents: Donovan Lorde

Department Rep Coordinator:  
Rowena Blackman-Stroud  
Retirees Officer: Shirley Patterson

**UUP/NYSUT Labor Relations Specialist**  
Lisa Mouscardy Willis

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