

OSA's LABOR HEROES OF 2009:

New York State Senator Diane Savino & New York State Assemblyman Peter J. Abbate

The editorial pages of New York's daily newspapers are not especially friendly to municipal workers. Carrying water for New York's corporations and elites, they do their best to pit public and private sector workers against each other, attack the benefits municipal workers and their unions have fought decades to obtain, and echo the views of conservative think tanks like the Manhattan Institute. Politicians are generally expected to toe this corporate line. Woe unto those who speak truth to power instead.

Earlier this year, the *New York Daily News* editorial page repeatedly savaged State Senator Diane Savino of Staten Island, who heads the Senate's Civil Service and Pension Committee.

What had she done to draw their ire? She had simply objected, eloquently, to the drumbeat call of the mayor and governor, amplified by the media, for a new and worse pension Tier 5 for city and state employees. She had dared to point out that a new pension tier would save no money immediately, since only new employees would be affected. Instead, she noted, the current fiscal crisis was being used as an excuse to attack hard-won benefits and to lower the long term cost of the civil service workforce.



The *Daily News* chose to label the Senator a liar, even when the Independent Budget Office also objected to the mayor's claim of immediate savings from Tier 5.

Senator Savino stood her ground and proved herself, once again, a friend of working New Yorkers.

The Senator is our hero and she should be the hero of all New Yorkers who care about maintaining a strong middle class. She is



fighting for fair and honest treatment for civil servants – and she is fighting to help ensure the city we all love does not become purely a playground for the wealthy. The more rich publishers fume, the more we know how special she is.

For many years, Assemblyman Peter J. Abbate has been a staunch advocate for working New Yorkers as chair of the Assembly Committee on Governmental Employees.

Earlier this year, the Organization of Staff Analysts joined other municipal unions in reaching out to Assemblyman Abbate in opposition to the Department of Citywide Administrative Services' plan for reclassifying an enormous number of civil service jobs from competitive class civil servants to exempt or non-competitive "patronage" jobs. No testing of merit and fitness needed for these special folks. More than 3,200 were for jobs that sounded a whole lot like analyst jobs, except they would have no civil service protection, probably no union rights, and could be appointed and fired at will.

Assemblyman Abbate assured us he will keep a vigilant eye on this and a host of equally corrupt proposals by DCAS aimed at reverting to the hire-at-will, fire-at-will style of city government of the 1800's.

Most legislators don't know what's wrong with these proposals, but Assemblyman Abbate does. We are fortunate to have him in defense of a strong civil service system.

Peter Abbate and Diane Savino are friends of New York workers. They are fighting the good fight.

For these reasons and more, the Organization of Staff Analysts is proud to name Senator Savino and Assemblyman Abbate our labor heroes of 2009.



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