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UUPconnect: Coronavirus

UUP’s Informational Newsletter on the COVID-19 Pandemic

This is the latest in a special series of UUPconnect issues dedicated to sharing important coronavirus-related information with UUP members.

COVID-19: The Numbers

These are cumulative numbers collected since the start of the pandemic:

441,911 confirmed cases in New York state

33,019 total deaths; 75,584 people have recovered

751,547 confirmed cases in California; 14,099 total deaths

6,397,851 cases in the U.S.; 191,803 deaths; 2,403,511 people have recovered

Globally, more than 28 million cases; more than 910,000 deaths

From Johns Hopkins University (as of Sept. 11)

Not on the list? We can fix that

If you’re reading this newsletter and it’s not being emailed to you, that’s a problem. Fortunately, it’s a problem we can fix.

To receive the UUPconnect: Coronavirus newsletter, email UUP Media & Publications Director Mike Lisi at mlisi@uupmail.org. We will add your email to our distribution list.

If your chapter has a coronavirus-related news item or an event, please share it with us so we can share it statewide. Please email your news items to Lisi at mlisi@uupmail.org.

Share this Page:
Kowal talks reopening, pandemic in new video

UUP President Fred Kowal discusses the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on SUNY’s campuses and how UUP members are responding to those challenges in a new video posted Sept. 10.

A link to the video is on UUP’s website; the video is on UUP’s YouTube page. This is the latest in a series of coronavirus-themed videos by Kowal; he began taping them in March.

Watch the video HERE.

UUP slates virtual tele-town halls, to start Sept. 15

SUNY campuses are open, and UUP members with questions and concerns can ask and air them at a series of regional virtual tele-town halls set to start Sept. 15.

Registration is open for the tele-town halls; click HERE to register.

Members can talk about what it’s like now that classes have resumed, and share their experiences with COVID-19 as campuses prepared to reopen. Members are encouraged to bring up problems or concerns that can be addressed at the chapter or statewide level.

“What our members think is important, and that’s why we’ve set up these tele-town halls,” said UUP President Fred Kowal. “Sharing our experiences as campuses reopened and what our members are dealing with now is a valuable exercise that will help keep our members safe and allow them to provide a quality education to students during this difficult time.”

The regional meetings begin at noon. Campuses have been placed into six regions based on location. Empire State College Chapter members should sign up for the session that’s closest to where they work.

The schedule of tele-town halls is below:

- Sept. 15 – Western NY (Alfred, Brockport, Buffalo Center, Buffalo HSC, Buffalo State, Fredonia and Geneseo)
- Sept. 16 – Capital District (Albany, Cobleskill, Polytechnic Institute and System Administration)
Sept. 17 – Central NY (Binghamton, Cortland, Delhi, ESF, Morrisville, Oneonta, Polytechnic Institute and Upstate Medical University)

Sept. 22 – Long Island (Farmingdale, Old Westbury, Stony Brook and Stony Brook HSC)

Sept. 23 – Hudson Valley/Metro-Downstate (Downstate Medical Center, Maritime, New Paltz, Optometry and Purchase)

Sept. 24 – North Country (Canton, Oswego, Plattsburgh and Potsdam)

Information on how to log in to the event will be sent to registrants the week of the tele-town hall they registered for; log-in information is individualized.

"UUP is standing strong in the face of the greatest challenges we've ever encountered," Kowal said. "I'm looking forward to hearing from as many of our union colleagues as possible as we continue to fight for safe, healthy communities and a better SUNY for all."

**Tri-state quarantine list sets a record**

The quarantine list that New York, New Jersey and Connecticut share as part of their preventive measures against the coronavirus is at a record high of 34 states and one U.S. territory.

Four states were added to the quarantine list this week: Delaware, Maryland, Ohio and West Virginia. All people entering New York, New Jersey or Connecticut from any state or territory on the list must undergo a two-week quarantine.

The quarantine list includes states or U.S. territories that have a coronavirus test positivity rate of at least 10 percent during a seven-day average, or more than 10 positive cases for every 100,000 residents.

People required to enter quarantine are asked to fill out a form, and then remain at their home, a hotel or other temporary housing for two weeks. The quarantine is largely voluntary, although failure to comply does carry a possible fine.

New York City has periodically posted authorities at bridges and other entry points to the city to enforce the quarantine; city officials have said the random nature of the checkpoints would encourage eligible people to fill out the quarantine form and comply with the quarantine requirement if they thought they might be questioned at an entrance point.
Coronavirus relief languishes in the Senate

UUP is asking members to continue to press New York senators Charles Schumer and Kirsten Gillibrand for a new coronavirus relief package. The calls and letters do make a difference, and it is essential to let lawmakers know that this remains a vitally important issue.

To take action on the HEROES Act, go HERE and HERE. You can also find these links on the UUP website's home page.

To put this in perspective: The coronavirus pandemic has been catastrophic for New York. In addition to the state's more than 32,600 known deaths from COVID-19 – a figure that may well be higher, because of undiagnosed cases in which people died at home - New York faces a budget deficit of as much as $30 billion in the next two years.

Certain programs, services and agencies could be cut by as much as 20 percent if the federal government does not provide new coronavirus relief. Most regions of the state have double-digit unemployment.

And the rest of the country isn't faring much better: As of late August, nearly 30 million people were receiving some kind of unemployment, according to the U.S. Department of Labor.

The House passed the HEROES Act in May, but the Senate has so far refused to consider the House bill. Instead, the Republican majority in the Senate cobbled together its own weak version of coronavirus relief, which Democrats called inadequate, at best.

Senate Republicans tried to vote Sept. 10 on their drastically scaled-back plan, but Democrats blocked the measure.

So, it's back to the drawing board for coronavirus relief, and that means the situation in New York will continue to worsen. And the outlook for anything on this to change before the November election is bleak.
UUP will host a virtual town hall with Sen. Shelley Mayer and Assemblymember David Buchwald on Wednesday, Sept. 16.

The virtual event will be held from 5:30-6:30 p.m.

Mayer (D-Westchester) and Buchwald (D-White Plains) will discuss the state's budget and funding for New York—including for public higher education, hospitals and health care.

To register, please email Celine Mell, UUP legislative coordinator, at cmell@uupmail.org.

This will be UUP's ninth virtual town hall with lawmakers since the coronavirus shutdown last March. These events have provided members with a forum in which they can engage federal and state lawmakers about issues of importance to public higher education.

Thousands of members have taken part in this series of virtual town halls.

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**Labor Day, pandemic edition**

Dozens of United University Professions members from the University of Buffalo and Buffalo State commemorated Labor Day Sept. 7 with vehicle caravans meant to recognize essential workers and send a clear message that UUP cares about the health and safety of the Buffalo community.

UUP members who work at UB and UB's Health Sciences Complex took part in the caravans, which circled the north and south campuses at UB.

You can see pictures from the events HERE and HERE.

“We were out on Labor Day to salute our essential workers in the community and across the state,” said Tom Tucker, UUP’s statewide Vice President for Professionals, who lives in the Buffalo area. “We wanted to let our community know that UUP cares. We live here, we work here and we’re a part of this community.”

UUP members in Buffalo also joined a car caravan organized by the Western New York Area Labor Federation. Members also took part in Labor Day events in Fredonia and Syracuse.

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**SUNY to hire student liaison, new SUNY COVID**

www.icontact-archive.com/archive?c=983301&f=22432&s=25441&m=2076618&t=4c74620ebbe8348ab7a065879c25f5a022c3c23defa70e0f7730be23... 5/9
SUNY students on campus will soon have someone to go to with their concerns about the pandemic and reports on unsafe conditions in dorms and on and off campus.

The University will soon hire someone who will act as a student liaison to new Chancellor Jim Malatras. This advocate, who will report directly to Malatras, will bring back comments from students about whether dorms and campuses are safe, if parties are being held, and other concerns and issues they may have.

Malatras announced news of the new position Sept. 10 on Spectrum News’ “Capital Tonight.”

Meanwhile, SUNY has set up its online “COVID-19 Case Tracker,” a tally of coronavirus testing and cases at its 64 universities and colleges. Data is reported by campuses every 24 hours.

Click HERE to view the tracker.

Special virtual Delegate Assembly set for Sept. 25

Registration for delegates is open for UUP’s special virtual DA, set for Friday, Sept. 25.

The DA will be held from 1 to 5 p.m.

Registrations must be completed by 5 p.m. Wednesday, Sept. 23. Delegates must register through the “Members Only” section of UUPs's website at www.uupinfo.org.

Email statewide Secretary-Treasurer Jeri O’Bryan-Losee at jobryan@uupmail.org with questions.

Drescher application deadline extended

The application deadline for the Dr. Nuala McGann Drescher Leave Program has been extended to Sept. 16.

The application is for leave in the 2021 spring semester. Applications will be accepted electronically.

Go to the NYS/UUP Joint Labor-Management Committee's website for more information.

Click HERE to access the website.
Americans like labor unions again.

According to a Sept. 3 Gallup poll, 65 percent of people surveyed said they approved of labor unions. That’s the highest it’s been since 2003.

Public support for labor unions has been on the upswing since dipping to an all-time low of 48 percent in 2009.

You can read a Gallup.com story about the poll HERE.

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Questions about voting this year? Read this.

One thing that most everyone agrees on is that the Nov. 3 election will be one of most important in the country’s history.

But the election is complicated this year, in large part due to the coronavirus pandemic. In New York, voters have two options: voting in person and voting with an absentee ballot.

The first step is the same for people who will vote in person or by absentee ballot: Make sure you’re registered to vote. You can do that HERE. If you’re not registered, you have until Oct. 9 to do so. Go HERE to find information on how to register.

Then, put on your face mask, go to your polling place on Nov. 3 and vote. Click HERE to find your polling place.

**Absentee voting**

On Aug. 20, the governor signed a law allowing all voters to immediately request absentee ballots; a second law allows ballots to be postmarked the day of the election.

You can apply for an absentee ballot online, by email, by fax or by mail. The state is still working on setting up an online portal for ballot requests; it is coming soon, according to the State Board of Elections website. You can also apply in person at your local county board of elections.

If you don't want to wait, you can download an absentee ballot application HERE and mail, email or fax it in. Make sure to mark the box that says “temporary illness” if you are requesting the ballot because of coronavirus concerns.

The deadline to apply online or by mail for an absentee ballot is Oct. 27. You can apply for a ballot in person up
Once you get your ballot, make sure that you vote and sign it before mailing it in. Detailed information on how to submit an absentee ballot can be found [HERE](#).

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**Student loan information**

The zero percent student loan interest rate has been extended to Dec. 31.

Also, payments on federal student loans owned by the Department of Education have been suspended until Dec. 31.

This means that borrowers are not required to make loan payments until Jan. 1, 2021, and no interest will accumulate.

Also:

- Payments you would have made, but are no longer required to make, will count toward Income-Driven Repayment (IDR) plan loan forgiveness.
- Payments you would have made, but are no longer required to make, will count toward Public Service Loan Forgiveness (PSLF) if you have a non-defaulted Direct Loan and work full-time for a qualifying employer during the suspension. You will need to submit an Employment Certification Form that includes this period to receive credit for your employment during this payment suspension period.

Borrowers who wish to make voluntary payments by FedLoan Servicing can do so at [https://myfedloan.org](https://myfedloan.org).

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**Support farm workers hit hard by pandemic**

The United Farm Workers is asking union members around the country, including UUP members, to support the workers at Primex Farms, a major nut producer in Wasco, Calif.

Workers at Primex who have spoken out against the company for failing to protect its employees against the coronavirus have been fired, even as more than 100 Primex workers have contracted COVID-19. UFW has filed charges against Primex with the National Labor Relations Board.
Union members can support the Primex workers by signing this petition, which you can access by clicking HERE. The petition demands that Primex rehire the fired employees and take needed steps to ensure its employees' safety.

In writing to UUP members to ask them to support the Primex workers, Tom Tucker, the UUP statewide vice president for professionals, thanked members for all that they have done during the most difficult time imaginable to serve students and patients. That same determination and strength, he said, can help other union workers who are struggling during the pandemic.

“Our faculty and professional staff have gone above and beyond the call of duty during this unprecedented time to make sure that we can supply the vital services it takes to continue educating our students and caring for our patients,” Tucker wrote. “Once again, labor has proven how vitally important it is to the health and well-being of our society.”

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**UUP In Memoriam webpage**

UUP remembers the active and retired members of our union family that we’ve lost to the COVID-19 pandemic.

If you know of a UUP member who has died due to COVID-19, please click the link below to enter their information on UUP’s In Memoriam webpage.

**CLICK HERE** to fill out the In Memoriam form.

Enter the decedent’s name (first name, middle initial and last name), select their campus from a pull-down list, and include your email. You may also leave a short personal note about the deceased.

We will never forget our colleagues who were lost to COVID-19.