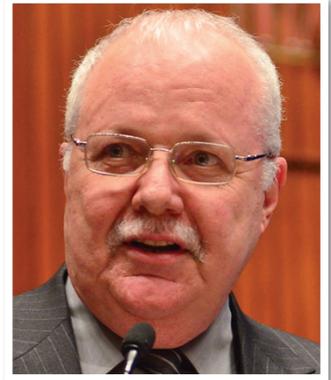


Public Employees Are Not “Leeches”



By **Ralph Palladino**
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AS public employees, we tend to have targets on our backs. Right-wing corporate types, like President Trump, say we are just “taking away” from the “job creators,” meaning Wall Street CEOs and others in the country’s richest 1%. They say we have no value and that the people receiving the benefits that we work hard to provide are “free loaders” interested in getting what they describe as “free stuff.”

This attitude is embodied in Republican U.S. Senator Grassley’s statements on why “we” need an Estate Tax. He said, “I think not having the estate tax recognizes the people that are investing, as opposed to those that are just spending every darn penny they have, whether it’s on booze or women or movies.” Funny, though, that when a group of corporate CEOs were asked if they would invest in jobs thanks to tax cuts, hardly anyone raised their hands. In fact tax cuts have never been proven to be “job creators.”

Fifteen years ago, while attending a union conference in a Washington, D.C., hotel, I wandered into a room where a “think tank” was coming up with ways to destroy unions – especially public employee unions. I picked up a document describing those who work in public service as “leeches.”

We save lives

Public employees work mainly in life-saving programs such as Food Stamps in SNAP and Medicaid, both of which are in the Human Resources Administration. We also work in public hospitals in N.Y.C. Health+Hospitals. In fact, the vast majority of people receiving those benefits are elderly, disabled and children – the most vulnerable populations. Only 15% of those on SNAP are able bodied, and the vast majority work in very low wage jobs. The same is true of Medicaid recipients.

The NYPD 911 personnel in Local 1549 are first responders who save lives in emergencies. The 311 Call Center personnel, who we represent, provide valuable information to the public. Other public employees working in the Fire and Police Departments save lives every day.

The rich and powerful, because they are wealthy, don’t care about Medicaid and SNAP, nor the recipients of those benefits. They don’t need assistance buying food and can purchase their own “Cadillac health insurance.” Regarding fire and police services, they don’t realize that it is their tax dollars that pay for those services. They don’t realize that *we and the public pay taxes in order to be able to receive those benefits when needed.* Nothing is truly “free.” Those tax dollars are our money and are what pays for our salaries and benefits.

The Real “Leeches”

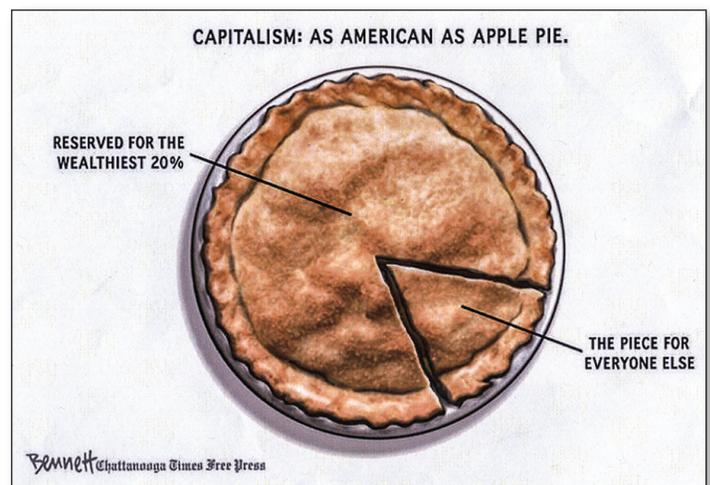
The real leeches are not the needy public, nor those working hard every day to help others. Instead, the leeches are the millionaires and billionaires, most of whom inherited their wealth rather than worked for it. It is not surprising that the Republicans push for an end to the Estate Tax that only affects

rich folks. The wealth built by their forefathers was off the backs of workers who toiled in fields and factories, resulting in the profits that made the rich even richer. Today, these 1%ers and captains of industry and Wall Street only care about their profits. The only way they make more is by taking it from us.

The answer to their biggest roadblocks is to destroy unions like ours. The union movement protects both workers and those in need. The rich buy politicians and legislators to do their bidding in the taxing, regulation and budget processes. They also try to rig the system by passing laws restricting the right to vote. They do so because they know they are a small minority and need to keep those in need from voting.

We win when we fight together

History shows that when millions of poor and working people join together with their allies, and build movements, we can change things for the better. This was true of the modern-day union movement in the 1930s and the Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s. This year we joined together to stop the Trumped-Republican Congress from destroying “Obamacare.”



The “Million Women” marches all over the country have created a wave of women and other progressives running for and winning legislative positions. Voters rose up in November across the country and elected grass roots progressive people to office, maybe a harbinger of what will happen next November. In December voters in Alabama did likewise in defeating Roy Moore.

Now we must join together with others and stop the budget attacks that we will see throughout the coming year. We have to vote in elections. If the 1% wins, thousands will face losing their jobs, while millions will face losing their benefits. We need you to be an active part of this battle. See what you can do on the opposite page. When we join together and fight back—we will win!