



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

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Senator Savino and Union Members Protest Illegal Firings of 14 Union Supporters at E-Z Pass Call center and Demand Better Customer Service

DIANE J. SAVINO March 5, 2010

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Group Calls on MTA, Port Authority to Improve E-ZPass Customer Service and Reverse
Illegal Firings

STATEN ISLAND, NY – Senator Diane J. Savino, Assemblywoman Janelle Hyer-Spencer, representatives from Assemblyman Matt Titone’s and Councilwoman Debi Rose’s office,

stood today in front of the E-Z Pass call center to protest the recent firing of 14 E-Z Pass Workers and to demand better customer service for E-Z Pass customers.

The MTA, Port Authority and Thruway Authority contract out the administrative services of E-ZPass to Xerox/Affiliated Computer Services (ACS), a for-profit private company.

Xerox/ACS, the E-ZPass contractor, has imposed a pay-per-call scheme on its workers. For workers, it is a modern-day equivalent of a sweatshop's piece-rate for stitching together clothing. Pay per call leads to a variety of customer service problems as customer service representatives rush E-ZPass users through calls.

This past Monday morning, all 14 workers in the Tags Department at the E-Z Pass call center were fired by Xerox/ACS. The previous Friday, the workers had stood up at their desks for 60 seconds while continuing to work in order to send a message to Xerox/ACS management. On Monday, all of the workers in the Tags department were told their services were no longer needed. Their jobs are being taken by a non-union subcontractor that works in the same building. Xerox/ACS has also hired 50 new non-union temporary workers. Union activist Frank Buonvicino was told that "we know you were one of the union leaders," as he was let go. Buonvicino and other Tags workers are among the strongest union supporters at the E-ZPass center. The firings are an illegal retaliation for the workers' union support. Buonvicino and other Tags workers joined CWA Local 1102 in May of 2009. Xerox/ACS has illegally refused to bargain with the workers, who do not have a contract.

There are many customer service quality problems at the center. For example, the Xerox/ACS management has instructed workers not to tell customers if their credit card is expiring unless the customer explicitly asks. E-ZPass users with an expired credit card are not allowed to pass through gated bridges and tunnels and are fined. Personnel must collect cash from them, which ties up traffic throughout the region.

Previous to pay per call, E-ZPass workers would help customers with all the potential problems they could see on an account, anticipating the problems customers might face. But under pay-per-call, calls get rushed through on instruction from management.

“Xerox/ACS must immediately reverse its illegal firings and improve customer service at E-ZPass. Xerox/ACS’s dismal record of treatment of their employees is compounded by their current pay-per-call scheme, which forces workers to rush through calls, causing customer service quality to suffer. Commuters who are already dealing with traffic congestion and high tolls deserve no-hassle customer service when calling. E-Z Pass workers have the right to be paid a living wage for the hard work they do, particularly in light of the companies’ large profits. Furthermore, Xerox/ACS’s illegal refusal to negotiate a fair contract with the employees’ union, CWA, will not be tolerated in a company that is doing business with the State of New York,” said Senator Diane J. Savino (D-Staten Island/Brooklyn). In May of 2009 workers at the Staten Island E-Z Pass call center voted to join Communications Workers of America (CWA) Local 1102. After the workers voted to join a union, Xerox/ACS imposed pay-per-call. CWA seeks a contract that would protect both workers and E-ZPass consumers.

When the workers joined CWA, they were employed by Affiliated Computer Services (ACS). On February 8, 2010, ACS was acquired by Xerox Corporation in a \$6.4 billion merger. Xerox/ACS’s contract to administer E-ZPass is worth over \$200 million. Company CEOs enjoy multi-million compensation and the companies make large profits.

“This injustice has been allowed to continue too long by the Public Authorities of New York. The MTA, Port Authority, and Thruway Authority have the ability to end this escalating labor dispute today but they continue to ignore the well being of these hard working New Yorkers and are also allowing customer service quality to suffer,” said Ed Luster, President of CWA Local 1102. “The MTA, Port Authority and Thruway Authority must ensure that Xerox/ACS behaves responsibly, does not violate the law, reverses its illegal firings and

delivers better customer service.”

“I gave 150% to this company for five years. Firing me and everyone else in my department for supporting my union is just plain wrong. These are hard times and I need my job and I want to keep helping our customers.” Said Frank Buonvicino, who was fired on Monday. At the event today Assemblymember Titone (D – Staten Island) said, “Any convenience E-Z Pass provides can be negated by inadequate customer service. Call center workers want to provide quality service, but they need adequate working conditions and a living wage. I call on ACS/Xerox to bargain a fair contract with its employees.”

Last month, as a result of the pay-per-call scheme, Spanish speakers could not get any customer service whatsoever. Spanish language calls take longer to process than English language calls. Workers who had continued to take Spanish language calls despite receiving lower compensation could not continue to afford to choose between their customers and basic economic necessities.

Until CWA held a press conference with elected officials, neither the MTA, Port Authority and Thruway Authority or Xerox/ACS did anything to help Spanish-speaking customers. The company only restored some Spanish-language service by hiring less-experienced temp workers. The company’s actions related to Spanish language service are a subject of an Unfair Labor Practice complaint filed against them.

“New York is on the go and E-Z Pass workers help keep us moving. They deserve better pay and working conditions for the important customer services they provide. In these difficult times we must hold corporate America accountable and ensure the fair treatment of hardworking people,” said Assemblymember Hyer-Spencer (D – Staten Island).

For more information please visit, www.NOTSOFASTEZPASS.org

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