

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
June 26, 2014

CONTACT: Max Dworin
202.224.7433

**SCHUMER: FED PROPOSAL COULD SHIFT
CRITICAL LABOR RELATIONS RESOURCES FROM
BUFFALO TO PITTSBURGH, LEADING TO DELAYS
IN LABOR ELECTIONS & INVESTIGATIONS –
SENATOR PUSHES TO ENSURE UPSTATE NEW
YORK WORKERS & BUSINESSES DO NOT LOSE
IMPORTANT ACCESS TO CENTRALLY-LOCATED
WNY REGIONAL NLRB OFFICE**

*National Labor Relations Board Currently Considering Consolidating
Buffalo and Pittsburgh Regional Offices, Creating Pittsburgh ‘Regional
Office’ and Buffalo ‘Sub-Regional Office’ – Demoting Buffalo to ‘Sub-
Regional’ Would Result in Critical Services Moving to Pittsburgh*

*Buffalo Regional Office Covers All of Upstate NY & Moving Services to
Pittsburgh Could Lead to Case Load Backups, Delays In Investigations,
Union Elections & Rulings; Would Severely Inconvenience Labor & Business
in Buffalo, Rochester, Syracuse, S. Tier*

*Schumer: These Critical Resources Must Stay In Western New York, Where
They Belong*

Today, U.S. Senator Charles E. Schumer called on the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) to reconsider its proposed consolidation of its Buffalo and Pittsburgh Regional offices, which would downgrade the Buffalo Regional Office to a Sub-Regional Office and move some services, including direct access to the Regional Director, solely to the Pittsburgh Regional Office. As a result of the proposed consolidation, the Pittsburgh Regional Office would serve as the primary office for Western Pennsylvania, a portion of West Virginia, as well as Upstate New York. Currently, the Buffalo Regional office is the primary regional office for the entire State of New York, with the exception of the New York City Metropolitan area. Schumer said that this consolidation would lead to delays in investigations, decisions, enforcement and elections; would likely diminish the resources available to labor and management in New York State; and would make it difficult for workers and businesses to participate in hearings due to it now requiring out-of-state travel. Having direct, in-person access to a Regional Director is critically important for labor and management across the state, particularly during emergency situations. For example, when an injunction is needed, it is the Regional Director that files the injunction and attorneys on

both sides of any labor dispute would be likely to want to argue their case in person. Having a Regional Director based solely out of the Pittsburgh office would make it harder for unions and employers to gain access to the Regional Director both due to distance and due to the increasing caseload that would occur as a result of the consolidation.

“Buffalo’s Regional NLRB Office plays a crucial role in resolving labor disputes across the state, and for the smooth functioning of the regional economy it is critical that we keep this resource where it belongs, in Western New York,” said Schumer. “Any proposal to shift key decision-making power to Pittsburgh does not sit well with me, and I am strongly urging the NLRB to reject this notion and affirm its intention to keep the regional Buffalo NLRB office as is. Stripping the Buffalo Office of its current status would inconvenience workers and businesses all across the state and could lead to major case-load backups that would have a disastrous impact.”

NLRB Regional Offices conduct elections, investigate charges of unfair labor practices, and protect the rights of workers to act together. They are a critical resource for workers and businesses across the country. This potential consolidation, however, threatens to weaken the Buffalo Office and make it more difficult for labor and management across the state to get access to the tools and resources they need.

Due to the recent departure of the Pittsburgh Regional Director, the NLRB did a review of its needs and concluded that the next step it should take is to consolidate the Buffalo and Pittsburgh Regional Offices. Schumer, however, cited a number of different factors as to why this would hurt New York State, and is urging NLRB to abandon its plan.

Schumer argued that it does not make sense to shift responsibility to the Pittsburgh Office, especially during this time of flux, when Buffalo already has in place experienced management, including a Regional Director and Regional Attorney. In addition, Schumer noted, locating the Regional Office in Pittsburgh would place it at the extreme end of the area it covers, inconveniencing staff, as well as the labor and management representatives that come to the NLRB to resolve disputes.

Schumer also noted that the area currently served by the Buffalo Regional Office Region is incredibly spread out – the territory includes Buffalo, Rochester, Syracuse, Albany, Binghamton, Poughkeepsie, Utica, Ithaca, Watertown, Cortland, Corning, Massena, Plattsburgh, Olean, Jamestown, and Dunkirk – and moving operations to Pittsburgh would make the region even more dispersed. According to Schumer, preserving the Regional Office in Buffalo would be more efficient, from both a time and cost perspective, to service all population centers.

Lastly, Schumer argued that there is a greater need for Buffalo to be a Regional Office location than Pittsburgh due to the fact that there are more union-represented private employees in Western New York – approximately 14.5 percent of the private sector employees in the Buffalo area, for example, are union represented and in need of these kinds of services, while only 7.5 percent of private sector employees in the Pittsburgh area are union represented.

A copy of Senator Schumer’s letter to NLRB Chairman Pearce appears below:

Dear Chairman Gaston Pearce,

I write you today to urge the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) to reconsider its decision to consolidate the Buffalo Regional NLRB Office with Pittsburgh's, and to demote the Buffalo office to a sub-regional office. This is a step toward weakening the office that is charged with investigating and remedying unfair labor practices throughout most of New York State. This consolidation is particularly concerning as it would mean that in emergency situations it would be significantly harder to find solutions to union problems. The Buffalo NLRB serves many areas across New York State including Rochester, Syracuse, Albany, Binghamton, Poughkeepsie, Utica, Ithaca, Watertown, Cortland, Corning, Massena, Plattsburg, Olean, Jamestown, and Dunkirk.

As you know, the regional offices have the authority to conduct elections for labor union representation. Western New York has a greater proportion of union represented employees than Pittsburgh. For example, 14.5% of the private sector employees in the Buffalo area are union represented, while in Pittsburgh only 7.5% of the private sector employees are union represented. I urge the NLRB to maintain the status of Buffalo as a regional office, ensuring that key leadership stays in New York State. Thank you for your attention to this important matter and I look forward to working with you to quickly resolve this situation.

Sincerely,

Charles E. Schumer
United States Senator