

Workers rally against cuts and commemorate King

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Deborah Parker of Peekskill, a Westchester County worker, joins Monday's rally in White Plains to commemorate the death of Martin Luther King and rally for union jobs.

Vincent DiSalvio/The Journal News

WHITE PLAINS — More than 500 people attended a "We are One" rally Monday in support of workers' rights and to commemorate the death of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.

Community members, workers and students gathered on Martine Avenue for the rally organized by the Communication Workers of America, the We Are One Coalition, the Westchester-Putnam Central Labor Body and the Working Families Party.

"We are one! We are one!" the crowd cheered.

King was assassinated 43 years ago Monday after traveling to Memphis, Tenn., in support of black sanitation workers.

Judi Brome, a Croton-on-Hudson resident and a **Civil Service Employees Association, or CSEA**, member, held a sign that read "From Memphis 1968 to Madison 2011."

"I wanted to support my fellow union workers and the middle class as we fight for our jobs," she said. "King was shot and killed while fighting for union workers in 1968."

Wisconsin Gov. Scott Walker signed a bill in March that reduced the collective bargaining powers of about 175,000 Wisconsin public employees.

Junio Alvarado, 57, vice president of the CSEA Unit 9200 — which represents 3,500 unionized Westchester County government professionals working in all county departments — held a sign that read "People Work, Layoffs Don't."

In the past year, Westchester County Executive Rob Astorino trimmed the county's workforce by about 10 percent with the help of a retirement incentive, a buyout package and layoffs, a move that has the CSEA organizing against him.

Also last year, more than 200 state employees in the Lower Hudson Valley lost their jobs.

"This is for a good cause because we need to stand in solidarity for these cuts," Alvarado said. "We the people of the CSEA are the ones that make Westchester function. There would be no programs for minorities such as Medicaid and food stamps. We have to educate one another and let the people of Westchester know that we are the reason the county works."

Jose Schiffino, statewide organizer of **CSEA 1000**, said he was happy to take part in the rally, especially during the anniversary of King's assassination.

"I think that it's great that we can get together on this day and discuss our futures and the futures of our families," he said.

"At the time, King saw that there was more than segregation and more injustices to people were being done," Schiffino said.

"Unions have helped people move from poverty to middle class, and (King) saw that it was everyone's right to do that."



Monday's rally attracted a crowd of more than 500 people.
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