

After serving as District 2 Vice President for 23 years Pete Catucci retired during CWA's 70th Convention in Las Vegas, Nevada. At the time of his retirement Pete was the longest serving Vice President on CWA's Executive Board having served with CWA Presidents' Glen Watts, Morton Bahr and Larry Cohen. Before serving as District 2 Vice President he was President of Local 2336 in Washington, DC.

Vice President Catucci, known to most as Pete, has dedicated his life for his fellow union brothers and sisters. His leadership and determination to fight for jobs with justice and dignity and better living wages for us, our children and grandchildren is second to none.

His dedication to organizing makes our District an undeniable leader in the representation of a wide variety of members. As he told us during convention "District 2 is recognized around the country for the most conclusive, merged groups in CWA."

District 2 includes CWA members in WV, VA, MD and DC. Under Pete's tenure we now have approximately 76 locals in our district and CWA represents more than 35,000 workers in both private and public sectors. Our membership includes: telecommunications, airline, healthcare, public service, printing and news media, broadcast and cable television, higher education and law enforcement.

He is proud of our District's accomplishments with the COPE program (money raised to support candidates for public office) and Local 2001 was equally proud to receive an award during convention where we have met our COPE quota for 30 years. Many COPE awards were distributed, however, in District 2 we have a total of seven locals meeting quota for more than 28 years!

While leading our Verizon bargaining committee Pete was successful in compressing four wage zones into two, he fought hard for wage increases and improved medical, dental and eye care benefits. When many doubted his ability he was the driving force to get the OT language we have in our contract today. He led us through strikes, "stopping the clock" during bargaining and working without a contract.

In September 2006, our friend, mentor and Vice President was diagnosed with ALS, also known as Lou Gehrig's disease. As time passed we began to see a different leader, one with the same determination, now with a renewed sense of passion, dignity and urgency. Pete's passion included the passage of EFCA (Employee Free Choice Act) and many days he could be found on Capitol Hill talking to elected officials that could make this happen. His dream "is someday all workers will have the right to organize without fear of job loss and intimidation."

In dealing with his diagnosis he educated himself about ALS and Embryonic Stem Cell Research. The more he learned the more he educated anyone willing to listen. As his disease progresses and speech is becoming difficult for him, this lively, larger-than-life person has begun to spend more time in a wheelchair. As many of us wiped away tears Pete tells us he has "lived a dream" and is so proud of District 2, his intent always to improve the union. He also tells us he has "been given a gift. The gift of love" he shares with his friends. This man who has been fighting to improve our lives learned he was loved by many.

For many of us he is the only leader, the only Vice President we have known. Change is difficult and the sadness of saying goodbye more so. But we know we are fortunate and our lives richer because our paths crossed. We are grateful we share a part of his life and thankful for the opportunity to see his leadership in progress.

Although Pete will be missed and thought of even more we, CWA members of District 2, plan to make him proud and carry on his desire to make lives better for working men and women. He educated us well.

With all this said I cannot end without saying we will all miss his TERRIFIC jokes! He began most every speech with a joke and I think most of us would agree he could come up with some good ones!

As they say, Thanks for the Memories and Godspeed my friend

