

Richard Lipsitz

ECIDA/RDC Vice Chair - President Emeritus, Western New York Area Labor Federation

Richard Lipsitz was born and raised in Buffalo. After initially attending George Washington University, he transferred to Antioch Washington-Baltimore ("Antioch East"), an experimental satellite campus of Antioch College, graduating in 1973 with a major in Political History. While in college, Lipsitz began his work in the labor movement, advocating for employees at George Washington University Hospital (now represented by 1199SEIU).

After returning to Buffalo, he was elected president of the Civil Service Employees Association chapter (CSEA #303) representing Roswell Park Cancer Institute (now Roswell Park Comprehensive Cancer Center). From 1987 until 1995 he served on the AFL-CIO Western New York Hospital and Nursing Home Council, a body created by three sponsoring unions: The Service Employees International Union (SEIU), the Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees Union (UNITE HERE, Local 4), and the Laundry and Dry Cleaning International Union. The council was later dissolved, and the employees are now represented by 1199SEIU Upstate. During this time, he completed a Master of Science degree in Education from Buffalo State College, graduating in 1992.

In 1995 Lipsitz began to work with the International Brotherhood of Teamsters (IBT), including Local 264 and Joint Council 46. From 1999 until 2002, he was the director of the Worker Institute at the Cornell ILR School extension in Buffalo, an initiative that offers union skills workshops, courses for credit, and other training. He was elected president of the Western New York Area Labor Federation, AFL-CIO (ALF) in fall 2011 and re-elected three times, his final term ending March 2021. In 2012 Lipsitz joined the Erie County Industrial Development Agency (ECIDA), serving as Vice Chair.

Mr. Lipsitz has been involved in numerous actions to ease the ills of social and economic injustices in urban and rural communities throughout Western New York. In his career with the AFL-CIO Western New York Hospital and Nursing Home Council and the Teamsters, he was lead negotiator during approximately 135 labor agreements, including many employers in WNY. He participated in numerous strikes and corporate campaigns, and is still active as a Teamster legislative volunteer.

As part of his presidential position with the ALF, Richard has served as an active member and board member of organizations that fight for low wage workers, such as the Coalition of Economic Justice. Along with engaging in the issues of social and economic justice, he has brought to the forefront high road economic strategies to achieve a positive, progressive economic future for WNY. He also serves on the Erie County Industrial Development Agency and is a member of the Greater Buffalo Racial Equity Roundtable, which works to bring racial and economic equity into an inclusive economy.

Throughout the years, Richard has participated in numerous legislative and labor campaigns to ensure that the voice of working people is heard and that their needs are not ignored by

public policy makers. Mr. Lipsitz is also a strong advocate for GOTV actions to ensure residents are registered to vote and that they are duly informed on political and legislative issues that affect our families.

Throughout his career, Richard has placed great emphasis on the fight against bigotry, racism and those with agendas rooted in white supremacy. The program of the ALF reflects this direction. He was privileged to speak at the 50th Anniversary Commemoration of the March on Washington at MLK Park in August of 2013, he was the recipient of the Coalition of Black Trade Unionist Labor Leader Award in 2014 and was also a speaker at the Concerned Clergy Coalition rally against the Grand Jury decisions in Staten Island and Ferguson, Missouri in December of 2014. The ALF has engaged the Baptist Ministers Conference of Buffalo and Vicinity and the Buffalo NAACP over joint work on the question of attaining career work opportunities.

In recent years, Richard Lipsitz led the labor organizing efforts alongside local partners in the fight to protect the community from social and environmental ills, such as the closing of the Buffalo Children's Psychiatric Center and the ramifications of closing the Huntley Plant.

Richard is a lifelong Buffalo resident. He has been married to his wife Liz for the past 47 years. They have two wonderful daughters and two very active granddaughters.