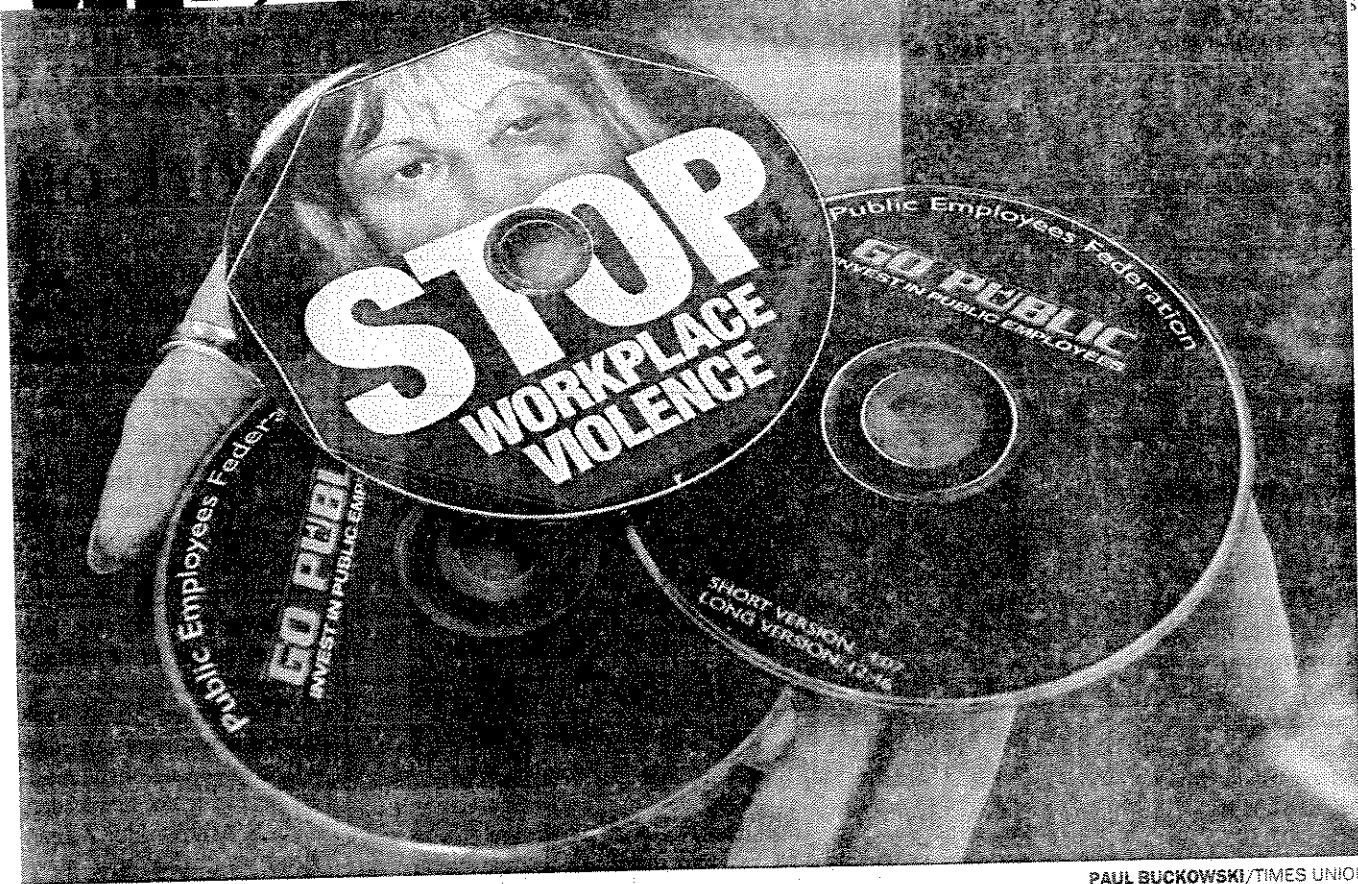


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Darcy Wells notes



PAUL BUCKOWSKI/TIMES UNION

THE NEW YORK STATE Public Employees Federation has produced two DVDs targeted at state policymakers.

Lobbying takes a digital turn

DVDs are the latest trend among groups looking to advance their causes

By RICK KARLIN
Capitol bureau

ALBANY — Forget PowerPoint. Those overhead point-and-click presentations are passe, in the words of one lobbyist. And e-blasts can fall victim to spam blockers. Mass faxes kill too many trees and add to office clutter.

These days, the newest technological tool embraced by the state Capitol's BlackBerry-happy political class is the DVD documentary.

Lobbyists, unions, environmentalists and other interest groups here and nationwide are producing and distributing message DVDs, some looking like mock newscasts, to help make their cases. DVDs are going to lawmakers or their staff members, as well as to potential new recruits or donors.

Earlier this year, the Public Employees Federation made a DVD promoting its plan for tougher workplace safety regulations. It included interviews with victims of workplace violence, similar to features shown in a TV newsmagazine. PEF will send the discs to lawmakers as well as district attorneys, said spokeswoman Darcy Wells. The union also issued DVDs last year outlining their objections to the privatization of state jobs normally held by public employees.

"They kind of used it as a tool not only to educate the public but the lawmakers too," Wells said.

Recently, environmentalists and wind-power proponents started sending out a 17-minute DVD titled "New York Wind Power" with testimonials from people who live near wind turbines and say the devices make good neighbors. They are selling them to wind-power businesses for \$8.95, but giving them out free to others such as schools or environmental groups. If lawmakers are interested in the topic, they'll probably get free copies, said

Marion Treiste, a consultant working for the growing wind-power industry.

"We find it to be a good tool to get out there in a very cost-effective way," she said. The group pressed 2,000 copies of their DVD for less than \$5,000, she said.

Three years ago, said Treiste, who advocates on a number of environmental issues, she used video, a technology headed toward obsolescence.

The ease with which one can navigate through various segments of a DVD also is an advantage, said Dow Haynor, who runs Golden Lamb Productions, which produced the PEF piece. "You hand them a DVD and they can go through it at their leisure," Haynor said.

In addition to PEF, he's done DVDs for Florida churches to use in capital campaigns and to welcome new congregants.

With statewide and legislative offices up for grabs this year, some politicians are also embracing the technology. Democratic gubernatorial candidate Tom Suozzi made a campaign commercial on DVD, and in Florida, Tom Gallagher

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who is seeking the Republican line for governor, has sent out DVDs targeted at campaign donors.

Actually, New York is a relative late-comer to this trend, which picked up momentum three or four years ago in California, said David Johnson, an Atlanta publicist who works for business and political organizations in several states. Mostly, lobbyists and trade groups are making and sending out DVDs before a state's legislative session begins, said Johnson, a Glenmont native.

Assemblyman Sam Hoyt, D-Buffalo, frequently works late to catch up on paperwork, which is when he can watch a DVD.

"I'll throw it into a computer and if it's an important topic that interests me, I'm going to watch the whole thing," said Hoyt, who, along with several lawmakers including Sen. Nicholas Spano, R-Yonkers, appears in the PEF DVD.

Spano said the discs are good for watching in quiet times, when hordes of interest groups and lobbyists aren't trying to buttonhole him.

Not everyone is sold on them, though.

"I don't have a DVD player," said Sen. Betty Little, R-Queensbury.

She believes nothing gets a lawmaker's attention like a handwritten letter.

And veteran Albany lobbyist Steve Weingarten adds that "everybody has always tried to use new technologies," but nothing gets a person's attention like face-to-face contact.

Good or bad, DVDs do appear to be the wave of the moment.

"We used to get lots of videos, I'd say six a year. Now I get 10 to 12 DVDs," added Hoyt. "It's a natural progression."

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