

The New York State Public Employment Relations Board (“PERB”) is saddened by the passing of Jerome (“Jerry”) Lefkowitz on December 21, 2017. Jerry was a central figure in the history of the Taylor Law and of PERB. Jerry’s involvement with the Taylor Law dates back to 1966, when he was tasked by then-Governor Nelson Rockefeller with drafting legislation that would secure for public sector employees the right to union representation, while protecting the public from interruption of public services. Jerry’s draft legislation was, effectively, the template for New York’s Public Employees’ Fair Employment Act, better known as the Taylor Law.

PERB’s first Chair, Robert Helsby, appointed Jerry as the agency’s first Deputy Chair, making him PERB’s first employee. Jerry served as Deputy Chair for the next 19 years. He worked closely with PERB Chairpersons Robert Helsby and Harold Newman, and he drafted the great majority of the decisions rendered by the Helsby and Newman Boards. Jerry also prepared PERB’s original Rules of Procedure, and he assisted in drafting statutory amendments to and legislative reports concerning the Taylor Law. Jerry’s counsel was critical in establishing PERB’s independence as a labor relations agency.

Jerry became a PERB Board Member in 1986, before accepting a position as Deputy Counsel for the Civil Service Employees’ Association in 1987.

In 2007, Jerry returned to PERB as Chairperson. He fostered esprit de corps among agency staff, met with public employers and unions, advocated for an increase in the agency’s budget, and began the process of organizing a conference celebrating the 40th anniversary of the Taylor Law. Jerry served as Chairperson until his retirement in 2015.

Jerry thrived on robust and creative legal arguments presented by parties in PERB’s proceedings, and he loved to debate the issues with members of the Board and his Deputy Chairs. For all his love of the law’s subtleties, though, Jerry never lost sight of the effect PERB’s decisions had and have on the lives of working people and the public. PERB’s decisions during his tenure as Deputy Chair and Chairperson reflect his commitment to fairness, scholarship, and the neutral application of the Taylor Law.

Jerry is survived by his wife Myrna, four children, and 10 grandchildren. PERB sends its sincere condolences to Jerry’s family, friends, and all those whose lives have been touched by his kind and gentle nature.

PERB mourns Jerry’s passing, and celebrates his legacy.

A detailed profile of Jerry is available on PERB's website at <http://perb.ny.gov/pdf/lefkowitz.pdf>.

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