



Rhode Island Council 94

American Federation of State, County & Municipal Employees, AFL-CIO

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RI Council 94, AFSCME, AFL-CIO Announces the Passing of President J. Michael Downey

North Providence – Today, Rhode Island Council 94, American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees, AFL-CIO announced the passing of President J. Michael Downey.

Alexis Santoro, Executive Director, stated, “It is with a heavy heart that I learned that J. Michael Downey, President of Rhode Island Council 94, AFSCME, AFL-CIO, passed away. Since 2005, Mike Downey provided bold leadership and constantly fought to enhance the lives of all working Rhode Islanders. Council 94’s membership extends our deepest condolences to his wife Claudette and their entire family.”

Mary Townsend, Executive Vice-President stated, “Mike was a kind, compassionate and strong union leader and family man. His presence and leadership will be deeply missed. We will announce arrangements to our members as more details become available.”

Biography-

J. Michael Downey was the President of Council 94. He was first elected in 2005 and reelected in 2006, 2010, 2014, 2018, and 2022. He also served as the President of the largest local in Council 94, Local 528 which represents workers at the University of Rhode Island, for over 27 years.

President Downey grew up in a union household. His father was the president of Local 28, the Plumber’s Union and Executive Director of the Allied Building Trades. His grandfather was President of the Bricklayer’s Union, Local 1.

Building on ideas generated by his over 27 years leading his own local, “Mike” as he prefers to be called, has championed and promoted policies and programs to increase member participation within the union. He expanded and enhanced the union’s political action committee and fundraising arm. He worked tirelessly to protect members’ wages, working conditions and benefits. He prioritized Council 94’s organizing program, adding new locals within the last few years.

Mike served on the RI AFL-CIO Executive Board and was also a board member of the Rhode Island Institute of Labor Studies. He also served on the University of Rhode Island’s Affirmative Action Committee for 8 years.

Mike was employed as the Chief Plumbing Investigator at the Department of Labor & Training and held a master plumber’s license. Prior to his position at DLT, Mike worked as a plumber at the University of Rhode Island for over 27 years.

Mike was also active in his own community. He served as Chairman of the Tax Assessment Review Board in Charlestown. Additionally, Mike was the Co-chair of Serve Rhode Island. He was a former Councilman for the Town of Charlestown and a former member of the state's retirement board.

A native Rhode Islander, Mike and his wife Claudette had been married for almost 50 years and had 3 children and 9 grandchildren.

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Council 94 represents over 10,000 active and retired state, municipal, and private sector employees.