

*News from the
NYS Assembly Committee on*

Governmental Employees

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Sheldon Silver, Speaker ■ Peter J. Abbate Jr., Chairman ■ 2010



MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN

The Assembly Committee on Governmental Employees has jurisdiction over proposals pertaining to civil service requirements and regulations including the Taylor Law, ratifying state employee contracts, hearing procedures and civil service lists. The majority of the proposals pertain to public pensions and the public pension system.

As every working person knows this is the worst economic crisis that our nation and our state have seen since the Great Depression. Every working person also knows that it has never been more apparent than now how important it is to provide the taxpayers of New York State efficient and effective services during this crisis. Whether it is Police, Fire, Sanitation or EMS, we in the community depend on these working men and women everyday to maintain vital public services. This newsletter is intended to convey the commitment of the working men and women across this state to ensuring effective and efficient services and the sacrifices that they made as we all share in the pain of this financial crisis.

I would like to thank all the committee members and staff for their dedication and attention to the needs of our state's public employees. Additionally, I would like to thank the public employee organizations, their representatives and the many government officials whose input on legislation is invaluable.

If you have any questions or concerns about issues or legislation before the Committee, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Peter J. Abbate Jr.".

Peter J. Abbate, Jr.
Chairman

ASSEMBLY REFORMS PENSION SYSTEM SAVES TAXPAYERS MILLIONS

Earlier this year, the legislature enacted sweeping reforms to the pension system that save taxpayers across the state hundreds of millions of dollars over the next ten years. This reform plan, popularly known as “Tier V,” successfully revamped both the Police and Fire Retirement System and the Employees Retirement System to assure local taxpayers that their property taxes will not go up due to any public employee costs. In fact, the amount of money that is saved over the course of the next ten years will assist in controlling pension contributions of localities, thus assisting taxpayers and allowing them to keep more of their hard earned dollars in their pocket. This fiscally responsible legislation was enacted through spirited negotiations with the thought of taxpayers and working men and women at the top of the list.



ANNUAL CANCER SCREENING FOR EMPLOYEES

In this day and age, the odds of an employee contracting a cancerous disease are on the rise. Recognizing this, the Assembly is working on passing legislation that would allow employees up to eight hours of paid annual leave to undergo cancer screening. Studies have shown that the longer an employee goes without knowing they are sick can, inevitably, raise the cost that the state pays to assure that employee's health.

It is our hope that this bill, which has passed the Government Employees Committee and is now in the Rules Committee, will give public servants across the state an opportunity to head off cancerous diseases and catch them in their opening phases before they progress and assure the taxpayers of this state a healthier workforce with fiscal savings on the costs of employee health care (A.10066).



HEALTH INSURANCE

Over the course of this year, the Assembly negotiated several initiatives that would protect the health insurance benefits afforded to working men and women across the state while at the same time protect the public taxpayer. Below are a few initiatives that were discussed.

Retiree Health Insurance Task Force

This bill would establish a task force to study retiree health insurance. This bill would further provide for a moratorium prohibiting employers from reducing the health insurance afforded to retirees during the time the study is occurring.

Health Insurance for Widows in Their Time of Need

This bill would allow widows of New York City Department of Corrections employees who passed away in the line of duty to purchase health insurance through the City of New York for their families. This bill would allow widows to purchase City health insurance at one-hundred two percent of the City of New York's group's rate.

LINE OF DUTY DEATH BENEFITS FOR FAMILIES OF FALLEN UNIFORMED PERSONNEL

It is always a sad time when one of our uniformed personnel dies in the line of duty. During this time of grief, it is only fitting that we honor these valiant heroes in a fashion that is fitting to the dignity and dedication that they have provided to the community. This year the Assembly passed two bills that would recognize just that. Both bills would extend benefits to the children of our fallen heroes and allow them to accredit additional civil service credits on exams that they take to obtain employment. It is only fitting that we honor their parents with these two meritorious bills (A.4104, A.10018).

SUPPORTING OUR TROOPS AND THEIR FAMILIES

This legislative session the Assembly has negotiated several initiatives that would provide much-needed benefits to our troops while they are away defending our freedom. Below are modest initiatives in recognition of their service.

Retirement Service Credit for Veterans Injured in the Line of Duty

In recognition for their service and ultimate sacrifice, the Assembly is working on a bill that would grant military service personnel retirement service credit. The bill would allow military personnel discharged from military service due to injuries suffered during military conflict to purchase three years service credit to be used toward their retirement. This bill attributes no cost to the taxpayers of the state of New York and provides appropriate recognition to those who are defending our freedom (A.7234).

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SUPPORTING OUR TROOPS AND THEIR FAMILIES *(continued from page 3)*

Reforms of the Citizen Soldier Act for New York City Active Military Personnel

This bill will provide employees of the City of New York Health and Hospitals Corporation who are also active military personnel with the benefit of keeping their health insurance and pension payments current while they are away fighting for our freedom. Further, this bill would provide for a differential plan, where the citizen soldier receives a payment from the City of New York for the difference between their military and city salaries. This initiative is a modest recognition of the service that these men and women have provided to our country and will put these honorable taxpayers in line with current benefits offered across the state (A.8500).

PROTECTION AND RETENTION OF OUR FIRST RESPONDERS

Over the course of this session several pieces of legislation were introduced that would protect the individuals that our community relies on most, our police and fire. In recognition of the role that these individuals play in our society and the risk that they take everyday when they suit up for work, the Assembly has taken it upon itself to recognize the need for protection for our first responders as well as the ability to retain our veteran force so they may teach our incoming recruits life lessons that they have learned during their time on the job. Below are a few pieces of legislation that acknowledge this.

Raising the mandatory age for police officers (A6254)

With people living longer and advances in modern technology, we believe that it is essential to maintain a veteran police force that can teach incoming recruits the trials and tribulations that they have faced while on the job. That being said, the Assembly is working on a number of measures that would raise the maximum police age from 63 to 65 for police officers.

Permanent Protection for Heart and Lung Diseases for Our Heroes

It is always a sad situation when a police officer or firefighter gets severely hurt in the line of duty. When this happens not only is the officer or firefighter affected but their families and the community at large takes a brunt of the pain. In recognition of this the Assembly took action the Tier V bill, which would give police officer and firefighters permanent protections if they were to contract a disease of the heart or lungs while they are on duty. It is our hope that these pieces of legislation can subside some of the pain and anguish that these valiant public servants face in their time of need as they are always there in ours.

