

*News from the
NYS Assembly Committee on*

Governmental Employees

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Sheldon Silver, Speaker ■ Peter J. Abbate Jr., Chairman ■ 2012



MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN

In these tough economic times, everyone knows how important it is to provide New York State with efficient and effective public services without increasing costs to taxpayers. As a policymaker, this is an often difficult but important responsibility. We must weigh the positives and negatives of each proposal while taking into consideration the most important factors: how will this affect the taxpayer and at what cost? This year, we have worked closely with the public employee workforce and the Governor's office to maintain crucial services without any ill-effect on the taxpayers of this State.

Whether it is police, fire, teachers, sanitation, or EMS, we in the community depend on these working men and women every day to maintain vital public services. This newsletter conveys my commitment to the working men and women across this State to ensure cost-effective, efficient services for taxpayers while holding the line on taxpayer dollars.

I would like to thank all the committee members and staff for their dedication and attention to the needs of our State's public workforce and taxpaying constituents. Additionally, I would like to thank the public employee organizations, their representatives, and the many government officials whose input on legislation has been invaluable.

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

Sincerely,

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

Peter J. Abbate, Jr.
Chairman

EXTENSIVE TRAINING FOR FIRST RESPONDERS WE RELY ON MOST



This year, the Assembly passed a measure that would require the city of New York to provide fire officers up to 40 hours of in-classroom training on contemporary fire codes, building and construction codes, and local city ordinances. This curriculum will benefit both the fire departments and the taxpayers they serve by ensuring a more knowledgeable and effective body of fire officers who are up to date in terms of these readily-changing codes and ordinances.

EXTENDING AND PRESERVING BENEFITS FOR PUBLIC EMPLOYEES

This legislative session the Assembly has negotiated several initiatives that would provide much-needed benefits to our public employees, while at the same time ensuring the most efficient usage of taxpayer dollars. Throughout our review, we weighed each bill on its merits and ultimately based our decision on the effect these proposals would have on NYS taxpayers. Below are examples of the many modest initiatives in recognition of their service.

A.9869/S.6868 – On December 7, 2010, NYC OTB shut down. The public employees who entered NYC OTB service were assured they and their dependents would receive health benefits upon retirement. This promise was broken when NYC OTB closed. This resulted in severe financial hardship and more importantly, danger to the health and lives of NYC OTB retirees and their dependents. The Assembly recognized this and passed a measure that would require the State of New York to maintain the health insurance and supplemental benefits received by retirees of the New York City Off-Track Betting Corporation.



A.5739-A/S.7209 – This bill would provide a 75% accidental disability benefit for police officers and firefighters and provide for the assumption that methicillin resistant staphylococcus aureus (“golden” staph infection) was contracted in the line of duty.

A.9920/S.7174-A – This bill provides certain accidental disability retirement benefits for fire marshals statewide.

A.9963-A/S.7001-A – This bill would ensure that police officers and firefighters employed by the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey are covered under health and safety standards.

A.9888 – This bill would provide continuous health insurance coverage to the spouse or dependents of public employees who are injured in the performance of duty or taken ill as a result of duty.



HOLDING WALL STREET ACCOUNTABLE FOR STEALING FROM NEW YORK STATE



Corporate greed hit an all-time high in recent years, when individuals in big banking and ponzi scheme operators, such as Bernie Madoff, fleeced hardworking New Yorkers of millions of dollars. What many people do not know is that some of these finances may have been stolen from our taxpayers' money in the New York State pension system, which was heavily invested in Wall Street at the time. This year, Assemblyman Abbate introduced new legislation that will continue the attempt to recoup misappropriated money. This bill will give authority to the New York State Attorney General to investigate if investors defrauded the State Retirement Fund. This fund is not only paid into by

hardworking New York State public employees but also supported by our tax dollars. Should it prove the Fund was defrauded, Assemblyman Abbate's bill will give the Attorney General the power to go after the perpetrators and seek restitution of that money. This will ensure that New York State has not been victimized by the heinous greed of white collar crooks.

REFORMING THE PUBLIC EMPLOYEE PENSION FUNDS

One of the hardest decisions we face is maintaining the workability and sustainability of public pension funds. When we make decisions on these funds, we take into careful consideration the effect our decision will have on the taxpayers of our State. These decisions assure a greater return on investment in the fund, thus lowering localities' contributions and giving taxpayers much-needed relief. Listed on the next page are pieces of legislation the Assembly passed that maintain the workability and sustainability of pensions.

A.9157-A/S.6224 – Permits certain eligible vested members of the NYC Teachers’ Retirement System in Tiers 3 and 4 who have ceased teaching to withdraw from such system and to transfer such credits to another state’s retirement system; requires return of accumulated member contributions. This bill would ensure the savings of hundreds of thousands of dollars in administrative funds and taxpayer dollars.



Institution of Tier 6 – This year, the Legislature, yet again, enacted diligently researched reforms to the pension system, saving the taxpayers across New York hundreds of millions over the next decade. This reform, known as “Tier 6,” revamped the State and City employees’ pension systems as well as police and fire pension systems, statewide. The amount saved by this reform will assist taxpayers by allowing them to keep more of their hard-earned money. This legislation was a cooperative effort reached through the spirit of negotiation with the best interests of NYS taxpayers taking priority.

IMPORTANT CONTACT INFORMATION FOR GOVERNMENTAL EMPLOYEES

As Chairman of the Governmental Employees Committee, it is my responsibility to make sure NYS taxpayers receive the best quality services provided by our state, federal and local agencies. I have listed important contact numbers below for various agencies you can call should you experience or notice problems with the services they provide.

Metropolitan Transit Authority (MTA) – Dial 511, or for deaf/hard-of-hearing customers: use your preferred relay service provider or the free 711 service relay to reach 511

NYS Department of Labor (DOL) – (888) 4-NYSDOL (888-469-7365)

NYS Workers’ Compensation Board – (877) 632-4996

Public Employee Relations Board (PERB) – perbinfo@perb.ny.gov

Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) – 1-800-321-OSHA (6742)

Assemblyman Peter Abbate’s Offices

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