



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Jeffrey D. Klein

Task Force Investigates Wasteful Spending by NYS Department of Corrections

JEFFREY D. KLEIN March 25, 2010

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Led by Senator Klein, Task Force on Government Efficiency Probes Commissioner on Excessive Overtime and Property Expenses

ALBANY – The Senate Task Force on Government Efficiency, chaired by State Senator and Deputy Majority Leader Jeff Klein, probed the Commissioner of the New York State Department of Correctional Services (DOCS) at a public hearing Wednesday, examining overtime pay and DOCS property and administrative costs. The hearing was the second conducted by the Task Force this month, taking a closer look at state agency spending and investigating potential ways to save the state money.

Earlier this year, Senator Klein's office conducted an investigation into spending at the Department of Correctional Services that identified more than \$15 million dollars in potential wasteful government spending through overtime pay and administrative and housing costs. In FY 2008-2009, for example, DOCS spent \$87 million on overtime costs, 20% of overtime spent by the entire state. Senator Klein's report also found that by consolidating and streamlining administrative staff positions, duties and contracts, DOCS could cut administrative costs by 20% and potentially save the state up to \$10 million a year.

“The Department of Correctional Services has the worst track record in the state when it comes to agency spending on overtime pay. During tough fiscal times, the state cannot afford to write any more blank checks - it's time to get smart about spending abuses, and that's exactly what we're doing here today,” said State Senator and Deputy Majority Leader Jeffrey D. Klein (D-Bronx/Westchester).

At the hearing, the Task Force heard testimony from Commissioner Brian S. Fischer of the Department of Correctional Services; Chris Leo, Legislative Director of the New York State Correctional Officers & Police Benevolent Association (NYSCOPBA); and Kenneth Brynien, President of the Public Employees Federation (PEF).

“There's no question that given the financial crisis we face, we have to find ways to operate more efficiently and save tax dollars. This has to happen across the board, at every state agency and there is a lot of opportunity to do so without impacting the quality of services and programs. The Department of Correctional Services performs a vitally important function, keeping us and our communities safer. My foremost concern is for the safety of our correctional officers. Now more than ever we need to ensure that state resources are being used in the best, most efficient possible way to maintain a safe prison environment,” said Senator Betty Little (R-Queensbury).

Senator Klein and his colleagues questioned attendees regarding three key areas of wasteful spending practices at DOCS – overtime pay, administrative and back office costs, and government housing that the state provides to superintendents at DOCS facilities.

Currently, each DOCS prison has its own full administration, even though many of the prisons' administrative centers are included in regional hubs located in close proximity to one another. Many administrative functions - such as payroll and procurement - are handled separately at each DOCS facility, despite the fact that separate facilities contract with the

same companies. For example, Downstate and Fishkill Correctional Facilities hire the same companies to deliver supplies and food, but sign separate contracts. Additionally, all sixty-seven of DOCS correctional facilities statewide have separate contracts with healthcare and medical services vendors.

The Government Efficiency Task Force also welcomed its newest member today in recently elected State Senator Jose Peralta.

"I am honored to serve on this task force and am confident that we can make government more effective and efficient. We are facing a \$9 billion dollar deficit as a result of years of out of control spending, inefficiencies in government and fiscal mismanagement. We cannot continue the practice of balancing the state's budget on the backs of hard working men and women while turning a blind eye to bloated budgets and redundancies in government agencies. I look forward to working with the task force to find real solutions to cut government waste and provide relief to New York taxpayers," said Senator Jose Peralta (D-Queens).

The Senate Task Force on Government Efficiency was formed to uncover inefficient government spending and develop productive solutions to put taxpayer dollars to better use. Chaired by State Senator and Deputy Majority Leader Jeff Klein, the bipartisan Task Force was formally announced in March of 2010. It is comprised of Senators Darrel Aubertine, Brian X. Foley, Craig Johnson, Betty Little, George Maziarz, Tom Morahan, Jose Peralta, Diane Savino, Jose Serrano, Bill Stachowski, Andrea Stewart-Cousins, and Dave Valesky.