



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Jeffrey D. Klein

Senate Task Force Targets Dot Suspicious Overtime

JEFFREY D. KLEIN May 4, 2010

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Task Force Reveals Whistleblower Website Tip; Probes Officials on Wasteful Spending

ALBANY, NY – The Senate’s Task Force on Government Efficiency, chaired by State Senator and Deputy Majority Leader Jeff Klein, unveiled a recent tip submitted to the Task Force whistleblower website in regards to suspicious overtime pay at the NYS Department of Transportation (DOT) at a press conference in Albany on Wednesday. Immediately following

the press conference, the Task Force held a public forum to probe DOT officials on this issue and other potential findings of excessive spending.

Late last month, the Task Force released the third in its series of investigative reports, this one citing \$60 million dollars in potential cost-savings at the NYS Department of Transportation, and more than \$200 million in funds the Department has already wasted. Following the release of the report, the Task Force received an anonymous tip on its whistleblower website that DOT's motor vehicle inspectors, 7 of whom fall into the top 10 overtime earners overall at the Department, may be inspecting vehicles not required to be inspected under NYS transportation law.

“Hard-working New Yorkers have sent their tax dollars to Albany only to have them used to fatten someone else's pocket through excessive overtime. We need to grab the reins on wasteful spending and get things moving in the right direction so that we can ensure that taxpayer dollars are being put to good use for years to come,” said State Senator and Deputy Majority Leader Jeffrey D. Klein (D-Bronx/Westchester).

At the hearing, the Task Force heard testimony from DOT Acting Commissioner Stanley Gee; Tom Comanzo, Vice President of the Public Employees Federation (PEF); and Jay Simson, Executive Director of American Council on Engineering Companies.

“As we face tough budgetary choices once again this year, New York State must get smart about curbing spending wherever possible. I’m proud to see that hardworking New Yorkers are already taking full advantage of our whistleblower website and joining our fight to cut government waste,” said State Senator Thomas P. Morahan (R-New City),” said State Senator Thomas P. Morahan (R-New City).

In its latest report, the Task Force uncovered close to \$60 million in potential cost-saving measures at DOT, ranging from moving some of its contracted services in-house (\$46.5 million) to speeding up its typical contract close-out time frame (\$10 million) to decreasing overtime spending (\$3.5 million) or cutting back on night work (\$360,000).

The Task Force report also outlined more than \$210 million in wasted funds that have already been spent, including \$150 million on contract management and further rising contract costs associated with changes in DOT specifications. In 2006, DOT revised its specifications for the type of reflective sheeting used on orange construction signs, requiring full compliance by January 2009. Although DOT claimed this change would come at no cost to the state, contractors statewide had to pay nearly \$27 million to replace the 2.7 million existing signs, a cost they are now passing onto the state in the form of higher contract prices.

In an effort to stem further wasteful spending and mismanagement of taxpayer dollars at state agencies, last month the Senate Task Force announced the launch of a new webpage where state employees and other interested New Yorkers can anonymously submit their

ideas, suggestions and feedback on how the state can conserve resources in this tough fiscal time, as well as to report any suspected wasteful government spending or abuse of tax dollars. This page is accessible via the Task Force's Senate website:

<http://www.nysenate.gov/committee/task-force-government-efficiency>.

The Senate Task Force on Government Efficiency was created with the goal of uncovering inefficient government spending and developing productive solutions to put taxpayer dollars to better use. Chaired by State Senator and Deputy Majority Leader Jeff Klein, this 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 David Valesky.