



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

George Onorato

## State Senate Passes Resolution Urging Metropolitan Transportation Authority to Seek Alternatives to Station Agent Lay-Offs

GEORGE ONORATO May 6, 2010

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### *News From*

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### **STATE SENATE PASSES RESOLUTION URGING METROPOLITAN TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY TO SEEK ALTERNATIVES TO STATION AGENT LAY-OFFS**

**Onorato Resolution Points Out Need to Ensure Continued Safety and Security in New York City Transit System, Particularly in Light of Continued Threats to Public**

State Senator George Onorato (D-Queens), the chairman of the Senate Labor Committee, today announced that the New York State Senate has adopted his resolution calling on the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) to seek alternatives to laying off station agents in these difficult economic times, arguing that “these workers are vital to helping to

ensure the safety and security of the transit-riding public.” About 500 employee layoffs are to begin this week in response to the MTA’s current financial problems.

Noting that this past weekend’s attempted bomb explosion in Times Square underscores the need to be vigilant in protecting residents and visitors to New York City from harm, Senator Onorato said, “Security cameras and buzzers in our subway stations cannot ever be a viable substitute for station agents in responding to passenger emergencies and in keeping an eye out for suspicious activity in subway stations and other key areas serving the transit-riding public.”

On top of this, Senator Onorato noted, station agents are estimated to save the system \$27 million a year that would otherwise be lost to turnstile jumping. “In these difficult fiscal times, this is important savings being made by valuable personnel,” he said.

Back in March, Senator Onorato wrote to MTA Chairman Jay Walder, asking him to consider various alternatives to laying off hundreds of station agents. The chairman responded to the Senator’s letter by saying that the MTA plans to go forward with its capital projects without mentioning the layoffs or any alternatives that were considered.

“Perhaps this Senate Resolution will send a clearer message to Chairman Walder that resorting to layoffs will ultimately hurt the agency, our overall economy, working individuals and families, and the safety and security of the transit-riding public,” Senator Onorato said. “New York State found ways to avert layoffs of some 8,900 workers last year despite serious fiscal challenges. The MTA should do so, as well.”

The Labor Committee Chairman added that these layoffs will only exacerbate an already extremely high unemployment rate in New York City, which has “very serious human and economic ramifications.” He noted that the unemployment rate in New York City is now at

10 percent, which is higher than the rest of New York State.

"Laying off these workers will worsen New York City's unemployment rate, especially for minority workers. For unemployed African-Americans, the City's unemployment rate stands at 38.7% and at 23% for those of Hispanic descent. Unemployed workers now face an uphill battle finding new jobs at a time when the number of job seekers in New York State exceeds the number of employment opportunities by more than five to one," said Senator Onorato. "Their layoffs will impact New York City's economy as well. When workers are laid off, they no longer have wages to shop at local businesses which are relying upon their purchases to survive in these challenging economic times. I hope the MTA will take into account these very serious human and economic impacts of putting people out of work and will look harder to find alternatives."

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*Please see below for the text of the resolution*