



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Jose Peralta

## Peralta, Senate Task Force on Government Efficiency Targets Dot Suspicious Overtime

JOSE PERALTA May 6, 2010

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

ALBANY, NY – Senator Jose Peralta and The Senate’s Task Force on Government Efficiency unveiled a recent tip submitted to the Task Force whistleblower website regarding 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.

"We are facing extraordinary budgetary challenges this year and we cannot afford to have any agency or individual waste tax dollars by racking up excessive overtime, mismanagement of projects or incompetence. I applaud the individual who came forward and reported this misuse of government resources. 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 blatant abuses of public monies" said State Senator Jose Peralta (D-Queens).

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.

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.