



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

George Onorato

Legislation Sponsored by Senator Onorato to Protect "Innocent Bystanders" During Strikes Signed Into Law by Governor

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**NEWS FROM State Senator George Onorato
Chairman, New York State Senate Labor Committee**

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LEGISLATION SPONSORED BY SENATOR ONORATO TO PROTECT "INNOCENT BYSTANDERS" DURING STRIKES SIGNED INTO LAW BY GOVERNOR

New Law Will Provide Timely Unemployment Insurance Benefits for Workers Who are Not Participating in a Strike, but Who Still Lose Their Jobs

State Senator George Onorato, the chairman of the New York State Senate Committee on Labor, today announced that legislation he sponsored to aid workers who lose their jobs owing to strikes in which they did not participate has been signed into law (Chapter 177) by Governor Paterson. Under the new "innocent bystanders" law, employees whose workplaces shut down or are otherwise disrupted by strikes that do not involve them would be able to apply immediately for unemployment benefits, instead of waiting seven weeks.

“This new law will help to ensure that workers who are not involved in a strike and who still lose their jobs through no fault of their own will not need to wait almost two months to apply for unemployment benefits and try to make ends meet while they are waiting to begin working again,” said Senator Onorato. “Under current law, which remains in place, striking workers must wait seven weeks to apply for benefits. This new legislation will ensure that New Yorkers who lose their jobs even though they are not participants in a strike are not unfairly denied the opportunity to seek benefits and therefore keep food on their tables and roofs over their heads.”

Senator Onorato noted that going out on strike is most often the last resort for workers, who have the right to fight for better working conditions, wages and other benefits, but that employees who do not participate in strikes should not be penalized as a result of job actions by other workers.

“When an employer experiences a downturn in business as a result of a strike, and is put in the position of laying off workers or even suspending operations altogether, those employees who had no voice or involvement in the decision to strike should know that they have access to unemployment benefits as a safety-net for themselves and their families,” the Senator said. “This ‘innocent bystander’ law will benefit these workers and help them to keep their heads above water until they are able to rejoin the workforce.”

The new law takes effect immediately.