



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Greg Ball

Senator Ball: “Communication in Emergency Situations Is Essential to Saving Lives”

GREG BALL March 29, 2011

ALBANY, NY (March 30, 2011) –Senator Greg Ball (R, C, 40th District –Westchester/Putnam/Dutchess) knows the need for communication in emergency situations is essential. As Chairman of the New York State Senate Homeland Security, Veterans and Military Affairs Committee, Ball is concerned about the preparedness of the state to handle any possible security threat. The Senator will be holding a hearing in NYC on April 8th to discuss with experts a range of issues regarding the condition of homeland security in New York. One of the most pressing issues to be discussed is the outdated radio systems being used by police.

A 2005 report issued by the Public Employee and Safety Health Bureau informed the MTA that “without the implementation of any changes to enhance the current system, employees, may be exposed to death or serious physical harm from injuries which could occur through the occupational hazard of not being able to operate and make contact with the current communication system.” In 2008, the MTA was issued a formal citation for failing to provide all of their employees a place of employment which is free from recognized hazards that are likely to cause death or serious physical harm to its employees.

In a letter to Senator Ball, Michael O’Meara of the MTA Police Benevolent Association

explained the gravity of the citation, “We believe this is the first time in New York State and possibly the entire United States that a police department has been issued a ‘notice of violation’ and ‘order to comply for a failure of its radio system.’”

Senator Ball is currently circulating O’Meara’s letter to all of his colleagues in the Senate, along with an invitation for them to join him at the hearing on April 8th to hear testimony on the issue. He is calling on his colleagues to start looking at these security risks that seem to keep falling through the cracks year after year.

“Nearly 10 years after 9-11 we are on the precipice of the anniversary of a horrific attack. As New Yorkers, and as elected officials, we have a responsibility to ensure that all levels of government are doing their absolute best to secure New York City and the State of New York,” said Senator Ball.

“Communication in emergency situations is essential to saving lives. Radio systems and other means of communicating must be updated. Thousands of deaths or injuries can be prevented if we get our officers proper means to communicate with each other,” stated Senator Ball.

Daniel DeFedericis of the New York State Troopers Police Benevolent Association explained the gravity of the situation, “Police members are continually placing themselves in harm’s way with only the hope that someone may hear them when the need for assistance arises.”

The Metropolitan Transportation Authority Police operate over 4,000 square miles including all of Long Island, Queens, Brooklyn, Bronx, Upstate New York and portions of Connecticut. They are also responsible for operations in the mass transportation hubs of Grand Central and Penn Stations in Manhattan.

At the security hearing on April 8th Senator Ball will be hearing from Congressman Peter King, Chairman of the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Homeland Security, Douglas Ziegler, Head of Security for the MTA, as well as Ray Kelly, Commissioner of the New York City Police Department.