



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

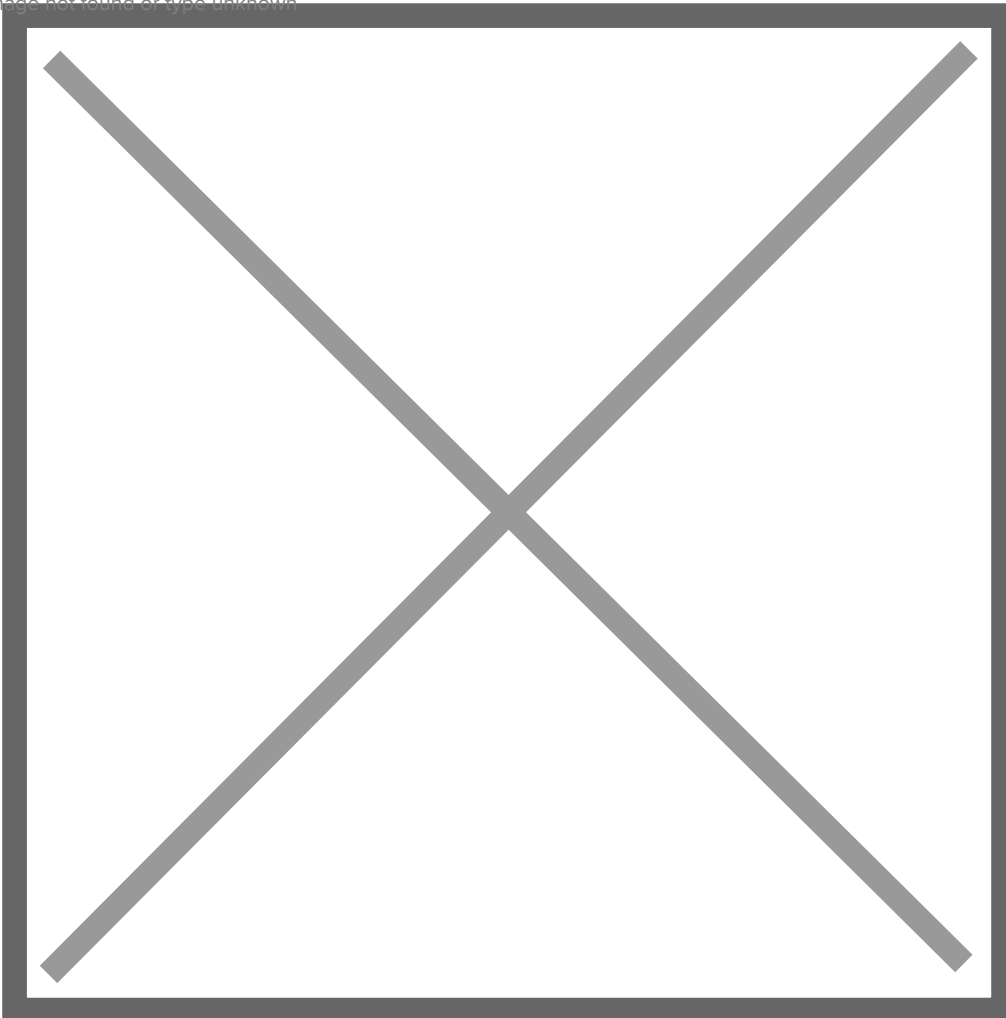
Bill Perkins

PEF Rejects Contract

BILL PERKINS September 28, 2011

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In July of 2011 a tentative five year agreement between the Public Employees Federation (PEF) and Governor Cuomo was reached. Subsequently, state officials withdrew layoff notices that were sent out weeks prior. Under the agreement, members of PEF would receive no base pay increases for three years, with two percent increases given in years four and five, and they would incur nine furlough days, five days in the first fiscal year and four in the second. Additionally, there would be considerable changes to employee healthcare contributions.

Governor Cuomo has said that the agreement would preserve the jobs of nearly 3,500 PEF members and bring financial stability to the state. On September 26, 2011, however, nearly 70% of the membership voted on the agreement reached between Cuomo and PEF's leadership and it failed by a count of 19,629 to 16,906.

Following the vote, President of PEF, Ken Brynien said, "The decision to reject the tentative agreement was made by our rank-and-file members who clearly feel they are being asked to sacrifice more than others, particularly in light of the pending expiration of the state's millionaire's tax." He also called upon Governor Cuomo to "direct his negotiators to immediately return to the bargaining table to work out an agreement which [the] members will ratify." He urged the governor to resist laying off thousands of PEF members, especially during this economic downturn.

There are indeed budgetary challenges that we are currently facing in this state, but letting hard working middle-class New Yorkers bear the brunt of the cuts is neither equitable nor fiscally prudent. Arguably, if the millionaire's tax had not expired, we would not be in this current situation and these cuts could be avoided. From an economic standpoint, laying off thousands of employees will undoubtedly weaken an already struggling economy. When workers are laid off the tax base deteriorates, local businesses suffer, and provision of services become increasingly difficult. How can Governor Cuomo claim that New York is open for business, as was the theme of his Regional Council Statewide Conference, and then threaten the very existence of a strong and viable customer base from which businesses will flourish? All workers deserve a decent paying job with good benefits, and a sustainable workforce is crucial to a sustainable economy.

The fate of nearly 3,500 employees rests in the hands of Governor Cuomo. Leadership is about making the right, and often times difficult decisions. Governor Cuomo, it is time to lead. It is time to make the

right yet difficult decision. As ranking member on the Civil Service and Pensions Committee, I am urging Governor Cuomo to come back to the negotiating table and protect New York.