



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Pete Harckham

Harckham and Buchwald Praise Executive Order to Reinforce Critical Staff During Crisis

PETE HARCKHAM March 28, 2020

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South Salem, NY – A special legislative initiative by New York State Senator Pete Harckham and Assemblyman David Buchwald to allow retired state employees, including health care workers and police officers, to earn over the salary cap during a declared state of emergency was approved yesterday in an Executive Order from Governor Andrew M. Cuomo. The Executive Order paves the way for more healthcare workers and police officers to serve on the front line of the coronavirus pandemic across the state.

“I thank Governor Cuomo for this timely and necessary Executive Order,” said Harckham. “Amid the ongoing COVID-19 crisis, there is an urgent need for more healthcare and law enforcement professionals to help safeguard our residents. It is fortunate that we have many retirees who are ready to answer this call, and I am grateful that this initiative has been expedited. The important thing is to put together the massive effort needed to fight the coronavirus. Helping our retired state professionals join the fight is a matter of saving lives that could be lost.”

While it makes sense to bring back retired public workers, many who are under 65, to work during the coronavirus pandemic, one obstacle has been the cap in salary earnings in public service before it impacts pension benefits. Under Section 212 of the state’s Retirement and Social Security Law, the current limit is \$35,000.

This is why Harckham and Buchwald earlier this month sponsored legislation in the Senate and Assembly, respectively, to facilitate a return to duty for public workers at a time when their experience and expertise are especially needed.

“With tens of thousands of retired healthcare professionals offering to return to work to care for their fellow New Yorkers, Senator Harckham and I introduced legislation to lift the earnings cap to protect those with state pensions from seeing their payments reduced,” said Buchwald. “I am thankful Governor Cuomo has now issued an Executive Order lifting the pension earnings cap so that retirees coming forward, at a time when we desperately need their help and experience, will not see their service to New York penalize them financially.”

The purpose of Harckham and Buchwald’s initial legislative initiative was to help deal with the strain being placed upon the limited number of public health workers and law enforcement officers. Being able to competitively recruit retired state and local health care officials and workers for the purpose of combating this public health crisis would help keep

the public safe, the two lawmakers agreed, and strengthen the healthcare and public safety fields as it addresses this state emergency.

Governor Cuomo's executive order is effective immediately.

"This waiver of Section 212 of the Retirement and Social Security Law was critical for our department to be able to provide increased services during the COVID-19 crisis," said Town of Pound Ridge Police Department Chief David M. Ryan. "I cannot thank Senator Harckham and Assemblyman Buchwald enough for their efforts to get all of this done. Now we can maintain necessary services through this crisis and until the end of 2020 without having further financial impact on our municipality."