



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Pete Harckham

## Harckham, Abinanti Introduce Legislation to Grant Early Retirement to Public Employees

PETE HARCKHAM February 4, 2021

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*Albany, NY* – To help reduce the public sector workforce, New York State Senator Pete Harckham and Assemblyman Tom Abinanti announced today that they have introduced legislation that provides temporary retirement incentives for certain public employees, which will result in savings to the State and local governments.

“The coronavirus pandemic has greatly impacted the finances of the State, as well as all of our municipalities, and early retirement incentives offer bottom-line relief to their budgets,” said Harckham. “By streamlining the workforce, we will create real savings across the board, and at the same time open up job opportunities for residents in many instances.”

“It is better that longtime employees retire with guaranteed income than governments be forced to lay off employees who then seek unemployment benefits,” said Abinanti.

“Retirements in the short term will cut local payrolls, and in the long term, open jobs for those who want to work in government.”

The new bill, S.2722, would be applicable to employees whose positions can be eliminated, and also to those who are 55 years-old with 10 years of service with the state or employees with 25 years of service. A separate bill covering early retirement for public employees in New York City has been introduced already.

Those eligible for the early retirement would be members of the New York State and Local Employees Retirement System; New York City Employees Retirement System; New York State Teachers Retirement System; New York City Teachers Retirement System; and New York City Board of Education Retirement-System. Members of the Police and Fire Retirement Systems are not included because of their existing 20- and 25-year retirement options.

“I support this bill because it will not only save us a good deal of money in the Town’s budget, it will allow us to offer employment to younger workers who badly need jobs,” said Peter Parsons, Lewisboro Town Supervisor and President of the Westchester Municipal Officials Association.

Savings from Harckham and Abinanti's early retirement bill would at least be partially offset by costs to the pension system and its members. Eligibility would be determined at employer discretion and excludes agency heads and elected officials. An employer who elects to participate in the retirement incentive program would be required to provide a 30- to 90-day open period to allow eligible employees adequate time to consider the incentive.

Eligibility is targeted to positions that can be eliminated for reasons of economy, consolidation, abolition or curtailment of governmental activities. An eligible position can also include a title into which an employee could be transferred to avoid a layoff.

Also, employees receiving the retirement incentive would have to forfeit the benefit of such incentive if they reenter public service and join or rejoin any public retirement system in the State.

James Gaine, a Mahopac resident who works in Brooklyn at Medgar Evers College of The City University of New York, said, "I have worked many long hours and spent a lot of time away from home, but now I'm ready to be able to enjoy my retirement with my family. This new bill will enable me to say goodbye, after 41 years, to my career as a carpenter and part-time educator in the public sector, and start a new chapter in my life."