



The Honorable Andrew M. Cuomo
Governor of the State of New York
Executive Chamber
State Capitol
Albany, NY 12224

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Carol Kellermann

Dear Governor Cuomo,

I am writing on behalf of the Citizens Budget Commission to recommend you veto A711B/S1411B, an expensive enhancement to volunteer firefighter benefits that was delivered to your desk yesterday. This bill, along with 15 other bills passed by the legislature that will be sent to you over the coming months, are expensive enhancements to government employee and retiree benefits and should be vetoed. These vetoes are necessary to preserve the fiscal restraint that you have sought over the last six and a half years.

The proposed benefit expansions enrich retirement benefits, increase disability benefits, and provide other enhancements. Several of these bills were passed without a fiscal note.

Enrich Retirement Benefits

- A3332/S3670 would allow Tier 6 uniformed court officers and peace officers of the unified court system to retire early without a diminution in benefits after attaining age 55 and 30 years of service. It would also decrease the normal retirement age from 63 to 62 and cost \$394,000 in past service costs and \$140,000 annually.
- A6277/S1850 would authorize counties to create special optional 20-year retirement plans for correction officers and deputy sheriffs who are engaged in correction officer duties. Currently, correction officers and deputy sheriffs are already eligible for generous, optional 25-year retirement plans.
- A7642/S6594 would authorize a retirement incentive that grants an additional four months of service credit for each year of service for certain law enforcement and maintenance employees at the Triborough Bridge and Tunnel Authority. The Authority has not requested this incentive, which would impact staff and increase authority expenses by \$300,000 annually.
- A8320/S6591 would allow New York City Transit employees enrolled in the 25 years of service, age 55 early retirement plan to purchase service credit for furlough time when the employee was on an eligible list due to the abolition of his or her position, costing \$160,000 annually.

Improve Death and Disability Benefits

- A473/S2516 would provide a local option for counties to increase disability coverage to equal full salary for probation officers. Currently, such benefits are only offered in Nassau County.
- A711B/S1411B would mandate that local governments provide volunteer firefighters enhanced cancer benefits, including lump-sum payments of up to \$50,000, a monthly payment of \$1,500 per month up to 36 consecutive monthly payments if a firefighter is totally disabled, and an accidental death benefit of \$50,000.
- A1644/S407 would provide for payment of full salary and medical expenses to parole officers employed by the State Department of Corrections and Community Supervision while subject to job-related injury or illness. These individuals are already eligible for disability benefits.
- A3503/S3671 would provide unified court system court and peace officers with an enhanced accidental disability benefit, at a cost of three times the impacted employee's salary.
- A5133a/S4077 would enhance death benefits for State correction officers who are retirement eligible, but die before retiring. The benefit will be the same as if those individuals had retired on the day of their death. Expires five years after enactment and has past service costs of \$13.7 million.
- A7127/S5705 would provide enhanced disability benefits to Nassau County fire marshals injured in the line of duty. First year costs would include \$200,000 for past service costs and \$35,000 in annual recurring costs.
- A7134/S5130 would increase disability payments for Nassau County sheriffs, deputy sheriffs, under sheriffs, and correction officers injured by a civilian visiting a law enforcement facility, costing the County \$1.15 million in past-service costs and \$200,000 annually.
- A7135/S5704 would increase disability benefits for various ambulance medical technician titles within Nassau County, with an immediate past service cost of \$1.75 million and annual costs of \$300,000.
- A7185A/S5484A would provide a special accidental death benefit for uniformed New York City sanitation employees, and provides a special accidental death benefit to spouses who remarry after the eligible member's death. This bill has an immediate past-service cost of \$8.9 million and would cost New York City \$6.8 million annually.
- A7511A/S3991A would provide an enhanced disability benefit to assistant wardens. The fiscal note for this bill does not provide a specific financial impact, but there would be a past service cost equal to 12.6 percent of impacted salaries and future cost averaging 2.0 percent of salaries.
- A8326/S6529 would increase disability benefits for airport firefighters and training and safety officers in the State Division of Military and Naval Affairs with heart, lung, or

certain cancer-related disabilities, from approximately one-third of final average salary (FAS) to 75 percent of FAS less workers compensation. First year past service costs would be \$202,000 and annual costs would be \$20,000.

Other Enhancements:

- A2830B/S5925 would expand excused leave of up to four hours for breast and prostate cancer screenings to all types of cancers.

Adopting any of these bills would erode the savings that New York State and its localities experience from the implementation of Tier 6. We urge you to veto these bills, affirming your commitment to fiscal prudence.

Sincerely,



Carol Kellermann