

AME is again present in Albany to defeat anti-union legislation and to protect its own AME members...

4/16/2009 - Cheryl A. Felice, President

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BOHEMIA, NY – The Association of Municipal Employees (“AME”) is pleased to announce that through its affiliation with the Public Employees Conference (“PEC”) two bills in Albany that would have had a negative impact on all public union workers in NYS have been defeated and one that safeguards all residents of NYS was approved.

The first bill that was defeated, a \$1.00 per claim tax on Insurance Companies would have affected Health and Welfare funds and have cost the unions collectively millions of dollars. Pete Meringolo, Chairman of PEC and AME Lobbyist, stated that to go after insurers, including self-insured union funds is a contradiction in terms as there is a health care crisis in this country along with economic instability. “Why penalize the unions who are providing needed services to the citizenry?” said Cheryl A. Felice, AME President. “With the need for health insurance at an all time high, why should those who are providing their members with insurance be taxed? Wouldn’t it be better to tax those companies who aren’t taking care of their employees who are then forced to rely on government sponsored social services such as Medicaid for their health care thus putting a larger financial burden on government?” Felice added.

The second bill defeated was the proposed creation of a Tier 5 to the NYS Retirement System. This would have given new employees hired lesser benefits than those currently in the system. “By creating another tier, which would provide less upon retirement, the state is saying, in essence, that a new member is not worth as much as their co-worker who is in a higher tier, yet both perform the same function. Clearly in this uncertain economic climate retirement benefits are paramount. As public servants we know we will not get rich. But, in exchange for lower wages we are given benefits at retirement that take that fact into account. To further diminish what we have come to rely upon is a slap in the face to every public employee in the state” Felice stated.

The third bill, which was approved, is the “Red Light Camera” bill. This bill adopted by both houses in Albany (thanks to Senator Brian Foley and Assemblywoman Patricia Eddington with co-sponsors Assemblywoman Ginny Fields and Assemblyman Bob Sweeney) promotes driver safety, as well as safety for pedestrians and will be revenue enhancing for the state. Photos taken by these cameras will provide crucial evidence to impede reckless drivers and protect the public. “AME is grateful to Pete as well as our own Legislative Director Debra Alloncius for assisting in securing legislation necessary to help close the gaps in the NYS budget. We will continue to lobby our legislators locally, in Albany, and in Washington D.C., to protect workers who are the watchful eye on all of NYS residents” Felice concluded.

The Suffolk County Association of Municipal Employees is the labor union for the 8,500 active and retired Suffolk County employees