



THE SENTINEL

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In this issue...

- Obituaries
- Obituaries Continued
- Letter 1
- Letter 2
- Letter 3
- Letter 4
- Letter 5
- Letter 6
- Sept 11th Ceremonies
- No Primary in Town of Newburgh
- Corrections Officers Concerned
- Legislative Forum Wrap Up
- CVH to Host Forum
- AG Forwards Complaint
- Council Appoints Acting Mgr
- Ejected Motorcyclist Rescued

Go...

[Home](#)

Corrections Officers Concerned

New York State Assemblywoman Nancy Calhoun co-hosted a meeting of the Assembly Minority Statewide Forums on Workforce Issues in the Correctional System on Wednesday, September 2 in New Windsor. Members of the New York State Correctional Officers & Police Benevolent Association, Inc. (NYSCOPBA) expressed to Calhoun and other members of the Assembly their concerns about the "top heavy" administration of the Department of Correctional Services (DCS).

NYSCOPBA represents over 28,000 active and retired law enforcement personnel. Donn Rowe, president of NYSCOPBA, told the panel that the state's medium security prisons are operating at approximately 104 percent capacity and maximum-security facilities are operating at 123 percent capacity.

"Despite the several cuts to the rank and file members of the NYSCOPBA who perform the day-to-day tasks of inmate supervision," he said, "the number of administrative positions within the Department of Corrections Services in recent years has in fact grown, and grown in a significant manner."

According to Rowe, 53 deputy superintendent positions were added this year, though they were not budgeted for. On the other hand, he explained that the department is down approximately 650 officers due to a hiring freeze.

According to Chris Leo of NYSCOPBA, the size of the administration was questioned after a comment was made about the lack of available parking at the administration office, Building 2, in Albany.

NYSCOPBA recommended consolidation of administrations at several facilities that are located next door to one another, such as nearby Shawangunk and Wallkill correctional facilities in Ulster County. Rowe argued that technology could allow for consolidation.

John Telisky, executive board treasurer for NYSCOPBA, advocated the elimination of such "perks" as subsidized on-site housing for superintendents or wardens as they were formerly called. He too argued, "communication is no longer a problem" and called the

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NYSCOPBA LEGISLATIVE DEPARTMENT

practice “unfathomable in 2009.” Telisky went on to explain that much of the decision-making is not made at the facility level. Rather, headquarters is consulted for decisions.

Calhoun, whose daughter is a former corrections officer, expressed concern that the decreasing number of corrections officers is creating more overtime, but creating unhealthy strain on individual officers and the functioning of facilities.

Audience members also expressed concern that farms owned by the department and operated by inmates are being shutdown for budgetary reasons, and annexes where chemical dependency and other programs were offered, are being eliminated.

Assemblywoman Annie Rabbitt, whose district includes parts of Rockland and Orange counties, suggested that the legislators tour a facility. Calhoun recommended that New York City legislators, where many inmates hail from, be asked to participate in forums such as this one, which are being held throughout the state. Assembly members will compile a report on their findings following completion of the forums and create plans that address these concerns.

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