

**News from: CSEA, Public Employees Federation, NYS Corrections Officer PBA, NYS Troopers PBA, NYS Police Investigators Assoc. and AFSCME Council 82**

**New York State unions file federal lawsuit over retiree health increase**

***Cuomo Administration unilateral action hits retired state employees hard***

ALBANY — A coalition of CSEA, PEF, UUP, NYSCOPBA, NYSTPBA, NYSPIA, and AFSCME Council 82, unions representing virtually all of New York State employees have filed lawsuits in federal court challenging the Cuomo Administration's unilateral increase in the percentage of health insurance contributions required of state retirees.

The legal challenge applies to changes made by the administration this fall and covers state employees who have retired and seen their share of health insurance premium increase beyond the level at which they retired.

Retirees have long contributed 10 percent of individual coverage and 25 percent of family coverage for their health insurance coverage in retirement based on the percentages included in the state contracts when they retired.

The changes imposed by the Cuomo Administration increase the percentage of contribution 2 percent for both individual and family coverage. The changes have severe and unexpected consequences on retired employees. The coalition of unions asserts that it is illegal for the state to increase those rates for already retired members. The unions did not negotiate such increases.

Contrary to popular perception, most public employee retirees have contributed to their health insurance and retirement costs over decades of service and receive only meager to modest benefits. For example, individuals who retired prior to 1983 receive an average pension benefit of \$8,760. Those who retired between 1983 and 1990 have a retirement benefit of \$13,786 annually.

Out of their fixed income, retirees must pay rising food, fuel, and gas prices along with all other living costs. A retiree on fixed income covered under the Empire Plan would pay about \$150 more annually for individual coverage and about \$460 more for family coverage. Costs for other health insurance options would vary according to the plan. Making matters worse, the Cuomo Administration has indicated that it will unilaterally impose a 6 percent increase

for retirees who retire on or after Jan. 1, 2012, these changes will result in a 60 percent increase in contribution costs for individual coverage and a 24 percent increase for dependent coverage.

All of the employee groups appealed to the Cuomo Administration not to impose this change on retirees before its imposition. The state must now respond to the legal filing in the next month.

"CSEA is disturbed and disappointed that the Cuomo Administration can be so heartless about imposing higher costs on people who have devoted their lives to the service of New Yorkers," said CSEA President Danny Donohue. "Nobody bargained for this and these increases will hit retirees hard – it's not right and they don't deserve this treatment."

"What the Cuomo Administration is trying to do is pull the rug out from under state retirees many of whom planned their retirements based on when they felt they could afford to retire. These decisions were based on a promise and expectation of what their health insurance costs would be. Changing the rules after the fact is outright wrong," said PEF President Ken Brynien.

"Our members selflessly work to protect New Yorkers in some of the most dangerous environments in the state. They have earned these benefits, and they are entitled to the coverage that the state agreed to when they retired," said NYSCOPBA President Donn Rowe. "Not only is this change unconstitutional, it's just unfair. The Cuomo Administration should recognize its legal obligations to its retirees and not shift its financial burdens on those least able to absorb the hit."

"The New York State Troopers PBA will continue to fight for the well-being of our retired members. It is imperative that the active members of the PBA protect those members who came before us and proudly wore the gray uniform while sacrificing so much in the name of public safety," said PBA President Thomas H. Mungeer.

Joseph Barrett, president of the New York State Police Investigators Association (NYSPIA), stated: "It is unfortunate that, after risking their lives for the citizens of the State of New York during their careers, that same State of New York now chooses to impose unprecedented health care cost increases on its retired State Police members and the widows and widowers of its deceased members. The State's decision to force this cost

increase on our retirees in these years when they live on a fixed income is particularly disturbing”

“The hardworking public safety professionals of New York State are particularly outraged by the Cuomo administration’s targeting of retirees,” said Council 82 Executive Director James Lyman. “Council 82’s retirees are men and women who dedicated their lives to providing a safer New York and deserve to be respected and honored for their service, rather than have the state turn its back and break its promise to its retirees.”