

Assemblywoman **Addie** Jenne

Thursday, November 9, 2017

Assemblywoman Jenne makes stop at Ogdensburg prisons



Assemblywoman Addie A.E. Jenne took the opportunity to tour the Ogdensburg and Riverview correctional facilities this week.

She said she appreciated the opportunity to meet with members of the executive staff at both facilities, including Riverview Superintendent Brian McAuliffe, Ogdensburg Superintendent Larry Frank, deputy superintendents, New York State Correctional Officers & Police Benevolent Association (NYSCOPA) leaders and representatives from the CSEA and PEF.

"It was a great visit. I like to stay abreast of what is going on in the facilities I represent. It is helpful to have the first-hand knowledge I gain from these visits

when we are addressing policy and budget issues in Albany," Assemblywoman Jenne said.

She noted she was invited to visit the two facilities by NYSCOPBA.

Assemblywoman Jenne said the visit also provided an opportunity to discuss legislative issues with NYSCOPBA President Mike Powers.

"We talked about the death benefit that was passed in the state Assembly and state Senate earlier this year. I expect the bill to be sent to the governor's desk in the next few weeks, and I urge him to sign it into law," she said.

The legislation (A.5133), sponsored by Assemblywoman Jenne, would give full retirement benefits to family members of corrections officers who die in the line of duty if they keep working after meeting retirement requirements.

It would ensure families of corrections officers are given the pension benefits their loved ones have earned.

Current law penalizes the families of correction officers working past their initial potential retirement date at the time of their death, according to Assemblywoman Jenne.

The families of those officers currently receive a one-time payment rather than long-term pension benefits for their survivors, a measure that is a disincentive for veteran employees to stay on the job.

This legislation remedies this discrepancy so that correction officers are considered retired if they pass away on the job.

"This has been a long-term concern, and it is an issue that is important to me and to veteran corrections officers at the five facilities in the Watertown hub," according to Assemblywoman Jenne.

"We are going to know in the not too distant future if the bill will be signed by the governor. I think this legislation would help with employee retention and recruitment. That's important at facilities in the North Country, where we are seeing high numbers of employees retiring due to the time when these prisons first opened their doors in St. Lawrence and Jefferson counties," she pointed out.

"Our veteran officers can provide valuable insight into the best practices to keep our facilities safe and secure. That's important to both staff and inmates and

allows our facilities to offer appropriate rehabilitative services," she noted.

She said she discussed a number of additional issues during her time at the two facilities.

"I got an update on how the facilities are doing, discussed the number of inmates currently housed in Ogdensburg and had an opportunity to learn about the investments being made at both facilities," Assemblywoman Jenne said.

"I was happy to see new roofs being installed at the Ogdensburg Correctional Facility and improvements that are being planned at the Riverview Correctional Facility," she noted.

She said she was also impressed with the relationship she saw between labor and management at both facilities.

"There seemed to be a good working relationship between the executive staff and employees at Ogdensburg and Riverview. It was good to see they are able to sit down at the same table and have frank discussions as they share their concerns. That relationship appears to be even more positive than I have seen in the past," the assemblywoman pointed out.

"The facilities appear to be relatively safe and functioning well. That's a reflection of the work of the security staff and sets the stage for the programs they offer to be as effective as possible," Assemblywoman Jenne added.

"Our facilities in the North Country are well-run and able to strike that balance. We have a dedicated workforce up here working to keep the peace. It's important to have programs ranging from workforce development skills and educational opportunities to classes that assist inmates with substance abuse issues," she said.

Assemblywoman Jenne said during her tour of the Riverview Correctional Facility she had an opportunity to tour a number of classrooms, ranging from a floor covering course to a welding class.

She said she learned, for example, the average length of stay is nine months at the Ogdensburg facility and a year at the Riverview prison.

Assemblywoman Jenne said the conversation ranged from talk about security issues and the impact of changes in the state's solitary confinement policies to concerns about staffing levels and technology available for staff at the two facilities.

"I will be following up on a concern raised that it takes a few months for a new employee or an employee in a new position to gain access to their computer. The state's outsourcing of basic IT functions, including simply getting a password, is clearly impacting worker productivity," she said.

"It is a horrible waste of taxpayers' money. It is absolutely unacceptable, and I question if we are saving any money by outsourcing that work if our workers can't access their computers for months— and the current two- to three-month delay apparently is a major improvement from the past when it could take up to a year," Assemblywoman Jenne said.

"There must be thousands of employees statewide that can't do their work. I was also concerned to learn there aren't even provisions to expedite the process for employees whose positions are computer dependent. We are essentially wasting a lot of time and money," she noted.

Assemblywoman Jenne said it was also positive to see a number of local people that have moved into top positions in both labor and management at the Department of Corrections and Community Supervision.

"It was great to see a lot of familiar faces from St. Lawrence and Jefferson counties that have moved up into leadership roles. That is a reflection of the quality of the workforce we are providing to the state," she said.

IN THE PHOTOS:

TOP PHOTO:

Assemblywoman Addie A.E. Jenne (left) talks with New York State Correctional Officers & Police Benevolent Association President Michael Powers (second from right) following tours of the Ogdensburg and Riverview correctional facilities. Assemblywoman Jenne met with the superintendents, deputy superintendents and employees at both correctional facilities. Pictured are (l-r): Assemblywoman Jenne, NYSCOPBA Chief Sector Steward Kevin Aldous, NYSCOPBA President Powers and NYSCOPBA Sergeants Liaison William Sellers.

BOTTOM PHOTOS:

Assemblywoman Addie A.E. Jenne discusses legislative issues with (l-r) NYSCOPBA President Michael Powers, NYSCOPBA Sergeants Liaison William Sellers and NYSCOPBA Legislative Director Daniel Valente.

Assemblywoman Addie A.E. Jenne talks with (l-r) NYSCOPBA Chief Sector Steward Kevin Aldous NYSCOPBA President Michael Powers, NYSCOPBA Sergeants Liaison William Sellers and NYSCOPBA Legislative Director Daniel Valente following a tour of the Riverview and Ogdensburg correctional facilities.



