



STATE OF NEW YORK  
EXECUTIVE CHAMBER  
ALBANY 12224

VETO # 88

December 29, 2021

TO THE SENATE:

I am returning herewith, without my approval, the following bills:

Senate Bill Number 4523, entitled:

“AN ACT to amend the retirement and social security law, in relation to establishing a twenty year retirement plan for members or officers of law enforcement”

Senate Bill Number 4859, entitled:

“AN ACT to amend the retirement and social security law, in relation to establishing a twenty-five year retirement plan for firefighters employed by the division of military and naval affairs”

Senate Bill Number 6976, entitled:

“AN ACT to amend the retirement and social security law, in relation to modifying the retirement program for Triborough bridge and tunnel members”

NOT APPROVED

These bills change the retirement plans of a set of State employees at Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC), State University of New York (SUNY), New York State Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (Parks), and Division of Military and Naval Affairs (DMNA), and a set of Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) employees working for the Triborough Bridge and Tunnel Authority (TBTA). These pension enhancement bills would impose substantial costs to the State and the MTA without any offsetting savings.

All of the workers covered under these bills provide significant service to New Yorkers, and I am proud that the retirement benefits provided to them under State law are significant and generous. However, any change in the retirement benefits like the ones in these bills should first be negotiated through the collective bargaining process before legislation is introduced. I believe the collective bargaining process is the best way for employers and employees to reach agreements on work and pension benefits.

I am also aware that for certain groups of State employees covered by these bills, there is a growing concern about the current level of retirement benefits and its impact on the agencies' ability to recruit and retain the best officers. For that reason, I want to bring all impacted parties together next year to discuss how to best improve recruitment and retention. New York State must have the best and the brightest, and I want to explore all options to meet our high standards for our workforce going forward.

Furthermore, I also understand that the MTA and its impacted unions are engaged in productive talks regarding restructuring the retirement plans in the bill referenced here, along with additional related collective bargaining issues. Therefore, I am encouraging the MTA and its unions to continue to work towards an agreement on retirement benefits that can then be introduced in legislation.

Because of the unfunded costs to the State and MTA for issues that are best suited to the collective bargaining process, I am constrained to veto these bills.

These bills are disapproved.

*Ruth Hochul*