



INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF FIRE FIGHTERS

HAROLD A. SCHAITBERGER
General President

January 29, 2013

Honorable Andrew M. Cuomo, Governor
State of New York
State Capitol Building
Albany, NY 12224

Dear Governor Cuomo,

I am disappointed and angered at your proposal to eviscerate the binding arbitration rights of New York fire fighters. Quite frankly, we would expect this type of an attack from conservative governors in Right to Work states. We certainly do not expect such a frontal assault on front line fire fighters and police officers from a purportedly progressive governor in a state that has been a citadel for organized labor.

New York has always been in the forefront of providing public employees with work place and bargaining rights since the passage of the Taylor Law in 1967. Since 1976, fire fighters throughout the state of New York have enjoyed binding arbitration provisions designed to provide a fair and equitable outcome for disputed contractual issues and eliminate the potential for work stoppages. From that point forward, every governor both Democrat and Republican has extended these protections without any diminishment of rights.

Your budgetary proposal that is also contained in Assembly Bill 3007/Senate Bill 2607 to insert "an ability to pay" clause into the statute is a thinly veiled attempt to render the law inoperable. I recognize that these provisions do not apply to FDNY members. Never-the-less, your proposal will negatively impact over 6,000 fire fighters in 102 jurisdictions throughout the state. Our economists believe that, as crafted, your proposal would effectively allow 95% of jurisdictions to avoid binding interest arbitration by falling into a "fiscally distressed" category.

The men and women fighting fires and responding to emergencies across New York have earned their right of binding arbitration. They deserve to have a Governor who stands with the state's first responders, not one who shamelessly attempts to undo over thirty-five years of workplace fairness and democracy in a legislative sleight of hand maneuver.

I sincerely hope that you will withdraw this ill-conceived proposal.

Sincerely,

Harold A. Schaitberger
General President

cc: Honorable Sheldon Silver, Speaker, New York State Assembly
Honorable Dean Skelos, Republican Conference Leader, New York State Senate
Honorable Jeffrey Klein, Independent Democrat Conference Leader New York State Senate
Honorable Andrea Stewart-Cousins, Democratic Conference Leader New York State Senate
Honorable Peter Shumlin, chair DGA
Honorable Debbie Wasserman Schultz, chair DNC
Richard Trumka, President, AFL-CIO
Mario Cilento, President, New York State Federation AFL-CIO
Michael McManus, President, New York State Professional Fire Fighters Association
William Romaka, 1st District Vice President, International Association of Fire Fighters
All NYSPFFA Affiliates