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## Cuomo Supports Fire and Police Unions' Push for Better Benefits for Recent Hires, Putting Himself at Odds with de Blasio

Governor Andrew Cuomo said that he supports the police and fire unions' push to get better benefits for recent hires, saying they deserve "the same assurances afforded to every other first responder in the state."

By Kenneth Lovett

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ALBANY — In another sign of his soured relationship with Mayor de Blasio, Gov. Cuomo is suddenly backing sweeter pension deals for cops and firefighters.

Cuomo told the Associated Press that he supports a push by the police and fire unions to boost retirement benefits for more recent hires who have been seriously injured on the job.

"We owe the brave men and women of our uniform services in New York City the same assurances afforded to every other first responder in the state," Cuomo said.

The statement surprised the mayor and others given Cuomo's successful push in 2012 to rein in pension costs and his routine vetoing of public pension bills.

De Blasio earlier this week proposed legislation giving newer uniformed hires higher disability pensions, but not as much as those hired before 2009.

In 2009, at the height of the Great Recession, then-Gov. David Paterson failed to sign a bill that would have enrolled new uniform hires into a more generous pension tier enjoyed by older employees, which provides those with career-ending injuries three-quarters of their final year's pay for life.

"Our bill will ensure every uniformed worker — especially those just starting out on the job — is protected by this city after a tragic injury," de Blasio said. "Our brave public servants put their lives on the line each day to protect this city and this bill lets them know: We are there for you too."

The police and fire unions say the mayor's plan doesn't go far enough—and the governor seems to be siding with them over de Blasio.

Cuomo's comment was ripped by Carol Kellerman, president of the non-partisan Citizens Budget Commission.

"I would think it was very unfortunate for the governor to argue to rollback some of the hard fought reforms he achieved and to be imposing an unfunded mandate, another thing he has decried, on New York City," Kellerman said.



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Cuomo spokesman Richard Azzopardi argued that “there is simply no good reason for hurt police and firefighters to be treated differently in New York City than in every other part of the state.”

The governor’s comments that there should be parity for all uniformed personnel “would make it impossible to do any kind of reforms,” she said.

A bill carried by Sen. Martin Golden, a Brooklyn Republican who is a retired cop, would boost the disability retirement pensions of those hired since 2011 to the same levels as those on the payroll before the reforms went into effect.

At the time, Golden said the short-term cost for the city would be about \$35 million a year for injured police, with a lifetime value of about \$617 million.

De Blasio says his proposed tweak would cost the city \$5.6 million for all uniform personnel in 2016, with a lifetime value of about \$101 million.

Cuomo and the mayor’s office also sparred earlier this week over homeless shelter funding and have been at odds frequently since de Blasio took office last year over education and other issues.