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De Blasio Added 25K Employees to Payroll Since Taking Office

By Michael Gartland

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Mayor de Blasio has expanded city government by adding more than 25,000 employees since taking office in 2014, a government watchdog has reported.

The hiring spree will swell the city payroll to a record 322,446 as of July, an 8.4 percent jump over the final year of the Bloomberg administration, when 297,349 workers were collecting paychecks.

"It demonstrates that there's been a lot of additional spending added to the budget," said Maria Doulis, VP of the Citizens Budget Commission, which released the data.

To offset the cost, the city is counting on debt savings of \$460 million this year and \$350 million next year, as well as \$305 million a year in lower Medicaid costs under a revised funding formula.

But Doulis said the Medicaid figure is shaky, since Albany determines how much cities chip in.

"It relies on the state to provide these savings," Doulis said.

De Blasio spokeswoman Karen Hinton said the "projections are based on actual Medicaid reimbursement rates."

"These are dollars that we know we will receive" Hinton said.

Other fiscal watchdogs and experts agreed the added workers could be a problem in the long term.

Manhattan Institute fellow Nicole Gelinas cited the city's \$140 billion in unfunded health-care and pension obligations over the next 50 years.

"We're adding them into a system we can't afford," she said. "We're already having difficulty paying these benefits."

And while more jobs is a boon to workers, the good times are unlikely to last.

"When the music stops and the economy starts slowing down, it's unsustainable without tax increases. That would have to go through Albany," said Richard Flanagan, a political science professor at the College of Staten Island.

And with the feud between de Blasio and Gov. Cuomo, securing a tax hike for the city will be tough.



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"There will be a tug of war between them, and the tug of war is usually won by the governor," he said.

Much of the new hiring is in the Department of Education, with 6,275 new jobs, the NYPD, with 3,084, and the Correction Department, with 2,239.

Hinton cited rosy forecasts from rating agencies.

"This administration is making targeted investments in public safety, public health, education, combating homelessness, vital infrastructure and more," she said, "all while monitors and rating agencies have applauded the administration's fiscal responsibility."