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New Bills Could Boost Government Workers' Pensions and Benefits

By Carl Campanile

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State lawmakers are pushing dozens of bills that would boost the pensions and disability benefits to tens of thousands of uniformed officers and other government workers — an end of session, election-year frenzy that could potentially cost taxpayers hundreds of millions of dollars, critics claim.

Among the proposed legislation is a measure that would restore three-quarters disability-pension benefits to recently hired cops and firefighters.

The bill, sponsored by ex-cop Sen. Marty Golden and Assemblyman Peter Abbate, both of Brooklyn, would create a statewide minimum three-quarters benefit for police.

If the proposal becomes law, the increase would force the city to pay an additional \$27 million in pension benefits in 2017, growing to \$40 million by 2021.

The bill also restores presumptions for on-the-job injuries and "increases the incentive to claim disability benefits," according to the Citizens Budget Commission, a government watchdog group.

"Employees would not make any additional contributions to fund the benefit," noted the group.

Mayor de Blasio backs a similar three-quarters benefit for firefighters, but unlike the police bill, firefighters have to pay an additional three percent of salary to help cover it.

The city would still have to shell out \$4.7 million in 2017 and \$8.3 million by 2021 to cover the three-quarters disability benefit.

Another bill introduced would raise disability benefits for correction officers and sanitation workers as well as law enforcement, costing the city over \$100 million by 2019.

The police-disability bill requires a "home rule" vote from the City Council before the Legislature can pass it, Abbate said.

Other pension bills include: allowing more recently hired workers to include mandatory overtime to count toward pension benefits, extending the filing deadline for firefighters to file for a disability pension from two years to five years, and allowing injured Port Authority cops and state troopers injured on the job to get full pay.



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"There are people running for office who want to be a hero with the unions," blasted Carole Kellerman, president of the CBC.