

New York State Public Employee Conference

Peter D. Meringolo, Chairman



Legislative Committee

Interim*

2025 Annual Report

Respectfully submitted,
Pete Paterson, Committee Chair

December 2025

**** This report will be updated and finalized following the close of the 2025 NYS Legislative Session, and posted to the NYSPEC website in January.***

The New York State Public Employee Conference 2025 Annual Report of the Legislative Committee is hereby submitted.

General Updates / Housekeeping

The 2024 Annual Report of the NYSPEC Legislative Committee was presented at our annual meeting at the Caribe Hilton Hotel in San Juan, Puerto Rico, on Sunday, December 7, 2024, and is posted in the member-only sub-menu of NYSPEC's website under "RESOURCES" ➡ "REPORTS".

NYSPEC's 2025 Legislative Agenda, which had been agreed to by NYSPEC's Board of Directors at the 2024 annual meeting, was posted (as a separate item on the Menu Bar on the public section) of NYSPEC's website as well. By agreement at the 2024 annual meeting, the agenda continued the policy adopted the previous year to illustrate just one priority – Tier Enhancement – as opposed to several priorities we had listed in agendas prior to 2024. The 2025 agenda was printed (as it is each year) in a booklet which was distributed at NYSPEC's Annual Legislative Breakfast on Tuesday, February 4. Hard copies of the booklet were available for all attendees at the breakfast, and subsequently distributed to all legislators and other key elected government officials through their respective offices.

Each year, subsequent to NYSPEC's annual Legislative Breakfast, the Legislative Committee typically meets, if necessary, during the remainder of the scheduled legislative session. In 2025 the committee conducted one additional meeting, on Tuesday, May 5, at the Fort Orange Club in Albany.

Tier Enhancement

Through the efforts of the NYSPEC Legislative Committee's Subcommittee on Tier Enhancement, in conjunction with other major advocacy groups, we were able to achieve two significant modifications to the newer pension tiers in 2024. However, no major tier enhancements were achieved this year.

Support / Opposition

One of NYSPEC's most important opposition issues in the recent past has been the "New York Health Act" (commonly referred to as single-payer health care), which remains a viable threat. It was re-introduced in 2023 by Senator *Gustavo Rivera*, and Assemblywoman *Amy Paulin*) but, once again, died in committee in both 2023 and 2024. However, it remains a serious concern for us going forward. Our position with respect to this issue has not changed: we do not oppose the concept of single-payer, but we do oppose the bill in its current iteration, as it does not address the major concerns we have for our members. The text from our original opposition memo, issued in March 2021, is excerpted here:

"... the above-captioned legislation leaves numerous unanswered questions and concerns which are extremely important to our membership. One – perhaps the most important – example, is how to recompense those public employees who have already paid, through reduced salary and benefits accepted as part of collective bargaining agreements negotiated over the course of decades, for their existing health plans. Indeed, for several years, the following language has appeared in the "WE OPPOSE" section of NYSPEC's Legislative Agenda: *"Any legislation which circumvents, converts, and/or nullifies hard-fought gains to health care coverage obtained through collective bargaining."* ..."

The bills, without modification, were re-introduced in 2025, once again by Senator Rivera (S3425) and Assemblywoman Paulin (A1466) . Both died in each house's Health Committee. Needless to say, we will remain vigilant regarding this proposal, as it still is a priority for the progressives.

During calendar year 2025, NYSPEC issued 11 formal legislative memoranda: 10 in support of legislative proposals, and one in opposition. All these memoranda are viewable on the public portion of NYSPEC's website under "NEWS" ➡ LEGISLATIVE SUPPORT (MIS) & OPPOSITION (MIO) MEMOS". Of the total 11 legislative proposals addressed by 2025 NYSPEC memoranda, *at the time of this writing* none been vetoed, two have been chaptered, one was dropped from the final budget, one died in committee, and seven passed both houses and await transmittal to the governor.

Note that the following compendium of bill synopses does not list the bills in any order of priority, but in the order that our respective formal support or opposition memoranda were issued, and posted on NYSPEC's website.

- A memorandum was issued in opposition to a proposal to include permission for the City of New York to amortize payments to certain NYC pension systems. This item was successfully removed from final budget
- A memorandum was issued in support of a proposal (S6045/A3282) which "adds assaults against certain employees of state and local government agencies as an assault in the second degree." It would expand inclusion in the section of law which addresses assaults on public employees. Status: died in committee.¹
- A memorandum was issued in support of the "LIEUTENANT JOSEPH BANISH MENTAL HEALTH ACT" (S6244 / A6721). This bill would provide testimonial privilege to peer support specialists and participants for peer support communications. Status: passed both houses; awaiting transmittal for gubernatorial action.
- A memorandum was issued in support of a proposal (S4554/A5458) which would require the NYC Police Pension Fund to accept members' applications as timely filed for acceptance as rebuttable presumption for WTC-related benefits. Status: Enacted on September 10 as Chapter #390.
- A memorandum was issued in support of a proposal (S8181/A8417) which would extend the 9/11 Worker Protection Task Force through June 10, 2030. Status: Enacted on September 10 as Chapter #384.
- A memorandum was issued in support of a proposal (S8207/A8801) which would increase certain retirement benefits for court employees. Status: passed both houses; awaiting transmittal for gubernatorial action.
- A memorandum was issued in support of a proposal (S3318/A8822) to increase excused time for military leave. Status: passed both houses; awaiting transmittal for gubernatorial action.

¹ Theoretically, since the 2025 session is not officially closed at the time of this writing, should an extraordinary session occur, any bill which "died in committee" still could advance through the legislative process. However, such a scenario is extremely rare, and highly unlikely.

- A memorandum was issued in support of a proposal (S2681-B/A6452-B) which would establish a critical incident policy for the New York State Police. Status: passed both houses; awaiting transmittal for gubernatorial action.
- A memorandum was issued in support of a proposal (S4599/A5868) which would grant enhanced pension benefits to certain county Fire Marshals. Status: passed both houses; awaiting transmittal for gubernatorial action.
- A memorandum was issued in support of a proposal (S6671/A7360) which would grant enhanced pension benefits to certain Nassau County Correction Officers. Status: passed both houses; awaiting transmittal for gubernatorial action.
- A memorandum was issued in support of a proposal (S6486/A6942) which would grant 20-year service retirement to certain NYC Corrections & Sanitation personnel. Status: passed both houses; awaiting transmittal for gubernatorial action.

“Special” Session

At the time of this writing, there is no indication that an extraordinary legislative session will be conducted during the remainder of this year.

2026 Legislative Agenda

Notice to the Directors and Legislative Directors regarding our 2025 annual meeting and convention was sent by Chairman *Meringolo* in November. That notice contained the following language:

“...One of the most important agenda items at our annual meetings is the adoption of the legislative agenda for the following year. The complete 2025 NYSPEC Legislative Agenda is posted on the public portion of our website and linked below. In preparation for discussions of our 2026 Legislative Agenda at convention, please review this now, or as soon as practicable, to determine whether you wish to propose any additions, deletions, modifications, etc. If you do want to propose changes, please prepare the same in written form and submit to NYSPEC Legislative Director Bing Markee - bing@nyspec.org - before the annual meeting. This will minimize the discussion and time it takes to finalize our 2026 Legislative Agenda. Please keep in mind that, from the completion of our convention, we have just a short period of time within which to get our 2026 Annual Legislative Breakfast (scheduled for Tuesday, February 3) booklet printed for distribution at that event. As you know, changes not agreed to at the convention necessitate time consuming back-and-forth communication to facilitate final language. ...”

The following two proposed modifications were submitted in advance of the annual meeting.

Chris Black, Legislative Director of the United University Professions, submitted the following paragraph as a new item for inclusion in the ONGOING INITIATIVES & LEGISLATION WE SUPPORT section of our 2026 agenda:

Enact the SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry (ESF) Stabilization Fund

This proposal provides \$10 million in direct state funding to ESF, which is urgently needed to financially stabilize the college and address its longstanding structural deficit. The ESF would be held under the custody of the state comptroller and would supplement, not supplant, customary annual state aid appropriations to the college. The disbursement of this funding would be authorized for specific purposes associated with the stabilization of institutional operations and the advancement of mission-aligned academic programs. Enactment of this proposal is necessary to preserve the future of one of our country's most prestigious environmental colleges.

Attorneys Sean Riordan and Jordan Ziegler, representing two of our sponsor law firms who deal with Workers' Compensation Law, collaborated once again (as they did last year) on language to modify the Workers Compensation Reform information in the ONGOING INITIATIVES & LEGISLATION WE SUPPORT section of our 2025 agenda. They suggested deletion of existing paragraphs numbered 6 and 8, as they are no longer relevant. Further, they recommend adoption of two new paragraphs, with the following text:

Any legislation that amends the Workers' Compensation Law and provides Workers' Compensation death benefits to the survivor, beneficiary or estate of a World Trade Center First Responder, worker or volunteer, where such worker or volunteer has been found to have passed away as the natural and proximate result of a certified WTC illness.

Any bill that that requires an employer or Workers' Compensation insurance carrier who elects to controvert the right of a claimant to compensation, and where such claimant holds a valid insurance policy, to provide medical treatment to the injured claimant and payment to the health care provider without regard to such controversy.

We thank Jordan and Sean for taking the time out of their busy law practices to help us with their expertise and input!

In addition to those two proposals submitted in response to last month's email request from Chairman Meringolo, Legislative Director Bing Markee and I propose the following additional modifications:

In the ONGOING INITIATIVES & LEGISLATION WE SUPPORT section, delete the **Heart Bill Clarification** paragraph, as this has been addressed legislatively.

In the ISSUES UNDER STUDY section, we recommend removal of the bulleted item, "*Defined benefit pension plans for private sector employees implemented and administered by comptroller*". This item was added to our agenda several years ago when we ascertained that the comptroller's office commenced consideration of the issue. We have been advised that this is no longer under consideration because a program – New York Secure Choice – has been implemented by the state. Additionally, with respect to the bulleted item, "*Analysis of program(s) under consideration by the State Comptroller which will allow public employers to pre-fund healthcare obligations*", the comptroller's office is formulating text for an LBD (sponsors yet to be determined) to address this issue.

The above modifications, and/or any others adopted following discussions at our annual meeting, will be added to final 2025 Annual Legislative Committee Report.

Barring any unforeseen circumstances it is anticipated that tier enhancement will continue to be the number one legislative priority for NYSPEC; two references to 2025 that appear in the existing **Tier / Pension Enhancement** paragraph in the PRIORITY section of the 2025 Legislative Agenda will be updated to reflect

the new calendar year, 2026.

In Closing

We look forward to 2026, when we can gather in the Capitol and the LOB to lobby in person on behalf of our constituents.

Speaking not only for myself, but for NYSPEC's Legislative Director *Bing Markee* as well: It is an honor and privilege to be part of NYSPEC's efforts to foster legislation on behalf of public employees and their families.

Respectfully submitted,

Pete Paterson

Chair, NYSPEC Legislative Committee

December 2025