



WCA: Act Quickly on Health Care Contribution

Posted By [Gerald McKinstry](#)

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County lawmakers must act quickly and not overstudy having workers pay a portion of their health care costs — it's a common practice, the head of a business organization said today.

Having nonunion managers pay 15 percent of their health premiums is an obvious and necessary step in reining in the rising cost of government, said William Mooney, president of the Westchester County Business Association.

“What we're calling for today is action, not another study. We don't have time for another study,” Mooney said, standing in front of the county office building on Martine Avenue. “We've got to trim the cost of government right now, not next week, not six months from now.”

County Executive Rob Astorino, a Republican, proposed the measure last month — one that is considered to be a preview for union negotiations — as one of many ways to fend-off a fiscal crisis and looming budget gap.

Astorino's plan affects just under 400 workers and would save \$1.2 million a year.

The county Board of Legislators is considering the concept.

Earlier in the week, board members discussed, and then put-off a vote on an alternative proposal to have some workers under the county executive's purview pay a percentage of their health package. The plan excluded the District Attorney's Office, Westchester Community College, the county clerk, the Board of Elections, the county Board of Legislators and the judiciary.

It was criticized as rushed, watered down and not thought out.

Responding to concerns, Chairman Ken Jenkins, a Yonkers Democrat, formed a committee to find ways to provide quality care at a better price; its first meeting is tomorrow.

Jenkins, who has said taxpayers deserved real relief and leadership, not “politics as usual with officials playing fast and loose with the numbers,” welcomed WCA's involvement.

“We have a legitimate opportunity to create a comprehensive and thorough plan and it must be done expeditiously,” Jenkins said.

The new temporary committee, which has a March deadline, will tackle broader issues such as finding larger savings by offering different health plans, pretax savings accounts, contribution tiers and incentives for workers to opt out.

That could mean savings of \$15 million to \$20 million, Jenkins said.

“The legislators need to act and demonstrate to taxpayers that they are sincere in their efforts and are willing to be part of the shared sacrifices they all talk about,” Mooney said.