

WCA assails wage mandate

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A pending state bill that would extend prevailing-wage mandates to contractors serving public utilities has sparked opposition from the Westchester County Association's Call to Action campaign.

The change to state labor law would require building service workers to receive an area's prevailing wage rate from contractors employed by any public utility distributing electric light or power or gas or steam services at state-regulated retail rates. The law, which has union support, would broaden the definition of a public agency to include utilities. The bill passed in the Senate June 1 and is pending before the Assembly labor committee.

In a statement opposing the bill sent to state lawmakers representing Westchester, WCA Call to Action leaders said the extended wage mandate for private businesses will result in higher energy costs for all consumers. "This is nothing more than a new 'tax' on your constituents and one that we can ill afford," they wrote.

In Westchester, according to the Call to Action campaign, a commercial tenant typically pays \$3 per square foot for unlimited electric consumption on the year. If utilities pay more on service contracts due to higher wages, those increased costs will be passed on to landlords and often passed through to tenants, "raising the cost of doing business in a state that ranks 49th out of 50 in terms of business-friendly environment," the bill's opponents said.

Campaign leaders urged Westchester's Assembly delegation to vote against the measure. Two in the delegation, Assemblyman Richard L. Brodsky, D-Greenburgh, and Assemblyman Michael Spano, D-Yonkers, are among the bill's co-sponsors. In the Senate, the approved bill's co-sponsors included Sen. Ruth Hassell-Thompson, D-Mount Vernon, and Sen. Andrea Stewart-Cousins, D-Yonkers.