



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Andrea Stewart-Cousins

## Senator Andrea Stewart-Cousins Works To Cut Government Waste and Inefficiency

ANDREA STEWART-COUSINS April 6, 2010

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(35th District, NYS) Senator Andrea Stewart-Cousins, as a member of the Senate Task Force on Government Efficiency, continues to work with her colleagues to examine spending practices in State agencies. Established in March, the Senate Task Force on Government Efficiency was formed to uncover inefficient government spending and develop productive solutions to put taxpayer dollars to better use. Last month, the Task Force held hearings on excessive spending practices recently found within the New York State Department of Correctional Services (DOCS) and State University of New York (SUNY) system.

In early March, the Senate Task Force on Government Efficiency held a public hearing on excessive spending on overtime pay and overhead costs in the State University of New York (SUNY) system. Late last year, Senator Klein's office issued a report that found \$23 million dollars in potential savings for the State by reducing overtime costs at SUNY educational and medical institutions.

On Thursday March 25th, the Senate Task Force on Government Efficiency held a second public hearing to examine the New York State Department of Correctional Services (DOCS) on excessive overtime pay and property expenses. Led by Senator Klein, members of the

Task Force questioned the Commissioner of the New York State Department of Correctional Services on the ways the Department has utilized State funding.

An investigation conducted by Senator Klein's office identified over \$15 million dollars in potential wasteful government spending in overtime pay and administrative and housing costs at the Department of Correctional Services. According to this report, DOCS could cut 20% of administrative costs, saving the state up to \$10 million a year by consolidating and streamlining administrative expenses, duties and contracts. In FY 2008-2009, DOCS spent \$87 million on overtime costs, amounting to 20% of overtime spent by the entire State.

"New Yorkers have a right to know where their tax dollars are being spent," said Senator Andrea Stewart-Cousins. "The Senate Task Force on Government Efficiency helps shed light on spending practices with the objective of protecting taxpayers from abuse or waste. While State agencies perform vital services for the residents of New York State, each must operate in a way that is cost effective. For far too long, taxpayers have been footing the bill for agency practices that are costing millions in overtime pay and overhead expenses."

As the Chair of the Local Government Committee, Senator Andrea Stewart-Cousins has been a leader in reducing waste and consolidating services in State and local government. Last year, Senator Andrea Stewart-Cousins introduced and passed legislation advanced by Attorney General Andrew Cuomo known as the "New NY Government Reorganization and Citizen Empowerment Act" (S. 5661), empowering citizens, local officials and local governments to reorganize outdated or less efficient districts by setting forth procedures for consolidation.

Senator Andrea Stewart-Cousins stated, "After 75 years of discussion about making government more effective and making spending more efficient, the Senate approved legislation that truly empowers our communities and will help address the overwhelming

burden of property taxes on families across the State of New York. The outstanding component of this bill, in my opinion, is that it is the taxpayers who will decide how to best enhance the delivery of services and achieve savings locally."

Senator Andrea Stewart-Cousins serves on the bi-partisan Task Force with Senator Jeff Klein (Chair) and Senators Darrel Aubertine, Brian X. Foley, Craig Johnson, Betty Little, George Maziarz, Tom Morahan, Jose Peralta, Diane Savino, Jose Serrano, Bill Stachowski, and David Valesky.

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