



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Timothy M. Kennedy

Senator Kennedy Urges Fair Wages for WNY Paramedics and EMTs; Stands with Teamsters Local 375 in Fight For Fairness

TIMOTHY M. KENNEDY July 12, 2013

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Kennedy calls on private equity firm Warburg Pincus, which owns Rural/Metro, to provide WNY's emergency first-responders with the dignity of a living wage to avoid a strike.

Senator Kennedy joins Teamsters Local 375 in fight for a fair wage and benefits package, as possible strike looms.

Kennedy: "Those in the business of saving lives deserve a living wage."

BUFFALO, N.Y. – As paramedics and emergency medical technicians at Rural/Metro Medical Service's Western New York Division prepare for a potential strike, Senator Tim Kennedy, D-Buffalo, is calling on Arizona-based Rural/Metro Corporation and Warburg Pincus, the private equity firm that owns it, to provide fair wages for their hardworking employees whom Western New Yorkers rely on during times of distress and disaster.

Kennedy says it's absolutely critical that the out-of-town private equity firm and the out-of-state Rural/Metro Corporation reconsider what it has called its "last and final offer" in its ongoing contract dispute with Teamsters Local 375, which represents about 400 Rural/Metro paramedics and medical technicians. Emergency medical technicians and paramedics working in Western New York are paid below Buffalo's living wage, a fact Kennedy finds shameful. According to the union, the paramedics and EMT's that rush to local homes in

emergency situations earn only \$10 per hour. They are looking to be lifted above the city's living wage standard.

"Those in the business of saving lives deserve to earn a living wage," Kennedy said. "The paramedics and emergency medical technicians whom Western New Yorkers rely on in emergency situations or when tragedy strikes deserve a fair wage for their selfless and vital work. They certainly earn it, that's for sure. These dedicated men and women who answer the dangerous calls and make those split-second, life-saving decisions provide an invaluable service to our community, and they deserve compensation commensurate with the critical duties they perform."

The two sides have been negotiating since April, and while they have made progress, they remain at odds over wages and health care benefits. The former contract between Rural/Metro and Teamsters Local 375, expired on June 30. On July 3, the union voted almost unanimously to reject a proposed four-year contract offer.

Kevin Drysdale, President of Local 375 called the offer "a very, very, very unacceptable wage proposal" in a Buffalo News report, published July 4. According to the union, they have delivered 10-day notice signaling its intent to strike if progress is not made.

In a letter to Rich Doggett, East Zone Vice President of Rural/Metro Corporation, Kennedy expressed his concerns with the company's unacceptable wage rates and efforts to eliminate existing health care options. Rural/Metro, based in Scottsdale, Ariz., provides ambulance services to communities in 21 states. Locally, Rural/Metro covers most of Erie and Niagara counties, one of the largest divisions across the 21 states in which Rural/Metro operates, a fact that was not lost on Kennedy.

“We’re talking about a division of this company which provides emergency services to one of the largest geographic areas in which the company operates,” Kennedy said. “They should be increasing their investment in their Western New York workforce, not diminishing it.”

Kennedy says his support for the Teamsters Local 375 is strong and unwavering.

“Emergencies often occur with little or no warning and they don’t wait for convenient times,” Kennedy added. “Whether it’s early in the morning or in the middle of the night, on the streets of our city or in the furthest reaches of our rural communities, these brave men and women stand ready to answer our calls for help around the clock. Today, I am proud to stand with them and urge company management to answer their call for fair wages to avoid a strike.”

To view Senator Kennedy's letter to the Rural-Metro Corporation, visit [this link](#).

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Senator Timothy M. Kennedy represents the New York State Senate’s 63rd District, which is comprised of the town of Cheektowaga, the city of Lackawanna and nearly all of the city of Buffalo. More information is available at <http://kennedy.nysenate.gov>.