

EDITORIAL: LONG STORY SHORT

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Protesting prison cuts

Ordinarily, our local Republican state legislators are touting their plans for reducing spending to rescue overburdened taxpayers.

So it surprised us to see these self-described waste cutters come out so strongly against a plan that could save the state \$30 million by closing underutilized prisons and facilities for the disabled.

The number of people housed in these institutions has been steadily declining. There are one-fourth fewer prison inmates now than New York held in 1999.

Yet Sens. Hugh Farley, Kathleen Marchione and Betty Little, joined by Assemblymen Jim Tedisco and Tony Jordan, are fighting the plan to close Mt. McGregor Correctional Facility in Saratoga County, citing the economic impact on the community.

Of course this plays well in their districts. But the lawmakers' fiscal credentials would be better served talking about real job creation, rather than lobbying to keep unneeded prisons open.

An essential next step

The Family Medical Leave Act of 1993 gave job protection to people who take unpaid leave for medical and family reasons. It was a good first step. But how many workers can afford to just stop their paychecks?

New York Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand has a proposal to ease that dilemma: a 0.2 percent tax on employees and employers that would support a fund to provide partial pay to those who take leaves.

Details and safeguards need to be worked out. But it's the right and necessary next step for this benefit to work.

After veto, now what?

The veto of a bipartisan bill to create a process for determining raises to the state's 9,200 management and confidential employees puts the burden on Gov. Andrew Cuomo to ensure fair treatment of these workers.

This group of employees, most of whom have had no raises since 2008, is barred by law from collective bargaining. They can only watch as their union counterparts negotiate wage and benefit increases and hope for some, too.

This isn't healthy workforce policy. Mr. Cuomo needs to propose an alternate solution that doesn't leave thousands of workers languishing without raises for years.