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WNED-AM 970 NEWS

Comptroller Suggests Hiring to Control Overtime Costs at County Jails

Mark Leitner (2011-09-21)

BUFFALO, NY (WNED) - The high cost of overtime at the downtown Erie County Holding Center and County Correctional Facility in Alden is proving to be a difficult problem to fix. Just how difficult was explained by Comptroller Mark Poloncarz at a Rath Building news conference this morning.



"Over the past several years overtime costs within the Jail Management division of the Sheriff's Office have skyrocketed and, without taking any action going forward, they will continue to skyrocket at an unsustainable rate," said Poloncarz.

The Comptroller believes overtime can be greatly reduced by hiring more deputies and corrections officers. Poloncarz said if 67 additional jail and correctional facility personnel were added to the current 654-person workforce, the county would enjoy a net savings of more than \$2.9 million over five years.

The proposal suggests adding 50 new deputies at the Holding Center at a cost saving of \$1.8 million and 17 correctional officers at the Correctional Facility, saving \$1.1 million.

Poloncarz says overtime accounts for roughly one-third of all jail management costs, rising from \$28.5 million in 2007 to nearly \$33 million in 2010.

The Sheriff's Department issued a statement late Wednesday afternoon saying, "We continue to try and do our best to keep overtime costs down...while at the same time working to provide the most efficient, cost effective and humane jail management services."

The Office says it has solutions to the problem that need political backing in Albany. It says it is fighting state-imposed bureaucratic mandates that drive up overtime costs; citing, for example, requirements that force the department to pay overtime to deputies and officers to guard empty visiting rooms and hallways on a weekly basis.

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