

415 Summer Street
Buffalo NY 14213
May 17, 2011

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Maria R. Whyte, Majority Leader
Erie County Legislature
286 Lafayette Ave
Buffalo NY 14213

We are concerned about the incident that occurred on April 8, 2011, in front of M&T Bank in Buffalo NY.

There was no reason and no justification for the brutal and aggressive actions initiated by the Niagara Frontier Transit Authority police against the peaceful protest that was being concluded in that location at that time.

We were outraged by the behavior of the NFTA police, and by the arrests of Nate Buckley, Eliot Zyglis and Jason Wilson. We demand that all charges against them be dropped.

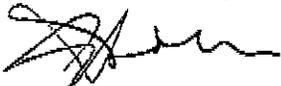
These actions by NFTA police, however, are representative of a problem that has continued for years.

NFTA police have been responsible for repeated incidents of aggressiveness and brutality. They have repeatedly and clearly shown that their mission is not to protect the community, but rather to inflict fear and physical punishment. Something must be done about that brutality.

We support all efforts to institute a civilian review board to deal with this problem effectively, which the NFTA clearly will not do. We call upon you to do everything within your power to make that happen.

Please respond.

Sincerely,



Beverly Hiestand
Eleanor Dorritie
Buffalo NY

Also sent to:
Hon. Andrew M. Cuomo, Governor of New York State
Erie County Executive Chris Collins
Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority Board of Commissioners
New York State Senator Timothy M. Kennedy

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Maria R. Whyte
286 Lafayette Ave.
Buffalo, NY 14213

11 May 2011

I am writing to discuss incidents around the Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority (NFTA) Police and their disturbing record of excessive force and violence. I was shocked—appalled, really-- to watch the video of Nate Buckley being assaulted this April by NFTA police. Aside even from larger questions about our right as citizens to enjoy the protections of the Constitution (and imagine that we could be at a place where we would ever imagine setting aside the Constitution! Yet from administrative levels on down, that is precisely where we find ourselves. But I digress), at the very least we deserve to be safe from the predations of officers armed with clubs and mace who have no compunctions about violence, and seemingly no moral compasses.

If the city of Buffalo and the NFTA cannot guarantee that, the very least they can do is to get rid of officers who enthusiastically and illegally use excessive force, and establish some sort of citizen review panel to investigate matters like this (and how sad, really, that we can be so certain than matters like this will come up again and again, but if the NFTA's history can be any guide, surely they will.)

I am a teacher. I remind my students continually that politicians are not their enemies, but rather that they themselves are the government. That is the great and challenging burden of a democracy. But it is only the case so long as we follow our own laws. Let those fall by the wayside—as we are doing in Nate Buckley's case—and you no longer have a democracy. When that happens, we are no longer the government, but rather the victims of it.

It is crucial that you think about this case, and what it says about not just the fate of one man, Nate Buckley, but about the direction in which we would like to be headed as a nation. I urge you to investigate the matter, to promote a civilian review board for the NFTA, to insist that the NFTA officers Brodsky and Russo be let go without benefits, and to work to have the outlandish charges against Mr. Buckley dropped.

Thank you,

Caitlin Crowell
95 Trinity Place
Buffalo, New York 14201