



# STEFAN I. MYCHAJLIW

## ERIE COUNTY COMPTROLLER

**July 16, 2020 – For immediate release**

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## **COMPTROLLER MYCHAJLIW RELEASES DATA ON COVID POLITICAL APPOINTEE OVERTIME**

*List includes Managerial Confidential employees, including Health Commissioner Dr. Gale Burstein, who topped the list at additional \$88,206 in overtime and holiday pay since March*

**(ERIE COUNTY, NY)** – The Office of Erie County Comptroller Stefan I. Mychajliw released a report to the Erie County Legislature today on the overtime costs of political appointees, officially called Managerial Confidential (MC) workers, incurred as a result of COVID-19.

Topping the list of those reaping the benefits of the highest paid overtime Coronavirus costs: Erie County Health Commissioner Dr. Gale Burstein. Her annual salary is \$207,292. Dr. Burstein received an additional \$83,996 in overtime payments since the start of the pandemic in March.

Dr. Burstein was also given another \$4,210 in holiday pay over the course of the 18-weeks covered in Comptroller Mychajliw's report. The combined total of \$88,206 in overtime and holiday pay for a little more than four months of work is higher than the annual salaries of three county-wide elected officials: the Erie County Clerk, Erie County Sheriff and Erie County Comptroller.

The \$88,206 in additional overtime and holiday pay for Commissioner Burstein for 18-weeks of work is also more than the annual salary of 4,105 full-time Erie County employees. These are filled, full-time positions, including library employees, assistant District Attorneys, DMV staff, Rath building and other county building workers.

Under normal circumstances political appointees are not paid money for overtime. Managerial Confidential workers typically accumulate "Comp Time" off instead. This point was addressed as recently as Tuesday by Erie County Legislature Chairwoman April Baskin during the Legislature's Finance and Management Committee meeting. Chairwoman Baskin addressed COVID-19 overtime pay for political appointees in her bid to receive more county-wide data for all MC employees:

"Managerial confidential people – employees, they cannot use overtime. So, the fact that you were able to be able to use overtime is because the County Executive declared a state of emergency. If we don't get the specifics on this, it could look like people were abusing their ability to access overtime because it's not something that is usually accessible for them."

*Source: Erie County Legislature Chairwoman April Baskin, Finance and Management Committee hearing, 7/14/20*

In light of the concerns expressed by Chairwoman Baskin and other members of the Erie County Legislature, the Office of Erie County Comptroller released the entire list of all political appointee overtime and holiday pay that is strictly related to the Coronavirus crisis.

“By gathering data, completing a report and releasing it publicly, I fulfilled my obligation to honor the request of the Erie County Legislature Chairwoman to provide this information. Taxpayers and the Legislature will decide whether or not these payments for overtime and holiday pay for political appointees is appropriate or excessive,” said Comptroller Mychajliw.

The federal government provided \$160 million in stimulus funds to Erie County to be used on COVID-only related expenses. The funds cannot be used on any previously budgeted expense. As such, the Poloncarz Administration is choosing to pay additional money for overtime and holiday pay to political appointees, rather than Comp Time, to MC’s that are putting in additional time as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

So, Erie County is using federal aid, federal tax dollars, to pay the overtime and holiday pay expenses for political appointees in Erie County government.

“No matter who pays the bill, we always need to remember this money comes from hard working families and taxpayers. To put things in perspective, the more than \$88,000 for 18-weeks of overtime and holiday pay for the Health Commissioner is more than two-and-a-half times what the average person in Erie County makes an entire year.”

“Just because the federal government is reimbursing Erie County for overtime and holiday pay for COVID-19 expenses, does not mean the Poloncarz administration has to do that. They have the option to grant Comp Time instead of cash. If one political employee hauled in \$88,000 in overtime and holiday pay for 18-weeks of work, I can’t imagine what the payments will be if this pandemic stretches many more months or even years,” said Comptroller Mychajliw.

There were 54 Managerial Confidential employees who were paid overtime for COVID-19 related expenses according to Comptroller Mychajliw’s report, for a total of \$825,039. This was for 18-weeks of Coronavirus crisis work going back to when the pandemic began in early March. This is in addition to their regular pay. The Office with the highest paid overtime is the Office of Erie County Sheriff, totaling approximately \$441,655.

Out of the 54 Managerial Confidential employees listed in the overtime and holiday pay report, only three, including Dr. Burstein, work in the Health Department. Offices and Departments with MC employees earning Coronavirus related overtime and holiday pay include but are not limited to: Office of Sheriff: 13; Office of Erie County Executive Mark C. Poloncarz: 11; Personnel: 4; Emergency Services: 4, Law Department: 3; Public Works: 3; Office of Erie County Comptroller: 0. Office of Erie County Clerk: 0. Office of Erie County District Attorney: 0.

In addition to overtime, some employees like Dr. Burstein also earned extra pay by working some or all of the three paid holidays that have fallen during the COVID crisis. A total of \$31,281 was paid to Managerial Confidential employees that worked holidays. A little less than half that total, \$14,913 was paid to MC employees in the Sheriff’s office.

While Managerial Confidential employees constitute only 6.5% of the entire Erie County workforce, they received 25.6% of the entire cost of COVID-19 overtime.

While \$825,039 was spent on MC overtime, that does not represent the total Coronavirus overtime bill for Erie County, which was approximately \$3,219,610 over this 18-week period.

This is why the Office of Erie County Comptroller will now review overtime paid to CSEA and other union employees. As soon as that review is complete, another report will be shared with the public and the Erie County Legislature. Information in the next report will include appointees that are technically members of a union like Erie County Medicaid Inspector General Michael Szukala, whose annual salary is \$120,047. Mr. Szukala has collected \$4,032.29 in overtime since the start of the pandemic.

“It is critically important to provide taxpayers with information on how their money is being spent during the Coronavirus pandemic. The federal government gave Erie County a lot of cash: \$160 million to fight COVID-19. People have the right to know exactly how every penny of their hard-earned cash is spent by the government,” concluded Comptroller Mychajliw.

All of Erie County’s COVID-19 expenses are publicly posted on the Office of Erie County Comptroller’s website under the “Taxpayer’s Checkbook” icon. The website is [www.erie.gov/comptroller](http://www.erie.gov/comptroller).

A breakdown of Erie County’s Managerial Confidential overtime costs by job title is as follows:

| <u>Office</u>      | <u>Title</u>                              | <u>Hours</u> | <u>Amount</u> |
|--------------------|---|--------------|---------------|
| Health             | Commissioner                              | 580.14       | \$83,996      |
| Sheriff            | Chief of Special Services                 | 659.5        | \$53,927      |
| Sheriff            | First Deputy Superintendent - Compliance  | 549.5        | \$49,451      |
| Sheriff            | Undersheriff                              | 473.5        | \$46,538      |
| Sheriff            | First Deputy Superintendent               | 540          | \$44,156      |
| Sheriff            | Chief of Administration                   | 503          | \$40,286      |
| Emergency Services | Commissioner                              | 498.89       | \$39,185      |
| Sheriff            | Superintendent                            | 437          | \$38,513      |
| Sheriff            | First Deputy Superintendent               | 434.5        | \$34,071      |
| Sheriff            | Chief Deputy Sheriff                      | 412.75       | \$33,058      |
| Emergency Services | Deputy Commissioner - Preparedness        | 548.28       | \$32,864      |
| Sheriff            | Chief of Operations                       | 490.25       | \$32,049      |
| Emergency Services | Deputy Fire Coordinator - Fire Safety     | 515.91       | \$28,394      |
| Sheriff            | Captain                                   | 419          | \$27,922      |
| Personnel          | Commissioner                              | 241.63       | \$20,090      |
| Sheriff            | Chief Deputy - Civil                      | 252.75       | \$18,722      |
| Emergency Services | Public Safety Officer - Special Assistant | 402.79       | \$18,015      |
| Purchasing         | Director                                  | 219.48       | \$17,604      |
| Sheriff            | Special Assistant to the Sheriff          | 371          | \$17,568      |
| Law                | Assistant County Attorney                 | 201.05       | \$17,292      |
| County Executive   | Deputy County Executive                   | 114          | \$13,510      |
| Health             | Deputy Commissioner                       | 192.14       | \$11,517      |
| Public Works       | Deputy Commissioner                       | 182.23       | \$11,439      |

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| Personnel                    | Deputy Commissioner                              | 197.46 | \$11,341 |
| Personnel                    | Chief of Classification and Compensation         | 116.38 | \$9,141  |
| Information Support Services | Director of Information Technology               | 101.88 | \$8,368  |
| Public Works                 | Commissioner                                     | 61.47  | \$6,500  |
| Labor Relations              | Commissioner                                     | 81.31  | \$6,207  |
| Social Services              | Commissioner                                     | 59.73  | \$6,167  |
| Sheriff                      | Chief of Community Services                      | 136    | \$5,396  |
| Budget and Management        | Deputy Budget Director                           | 63.97  | \$5,131  |
| Information Support Services | Chief Information Officer                        | 37.26  | \$4,416  |
| Central Police Services      | Commissioner                                     | 43.69  | \$3,632  |
| Personnel                    | Secretary, Commissioner of Personnel             | 88.53  | \$2,854  |
| Senior Services              | Commissioner                                     | 34.75  | \$2,787  |
| Social Services              | First Deputy Commissioner                        | 26.82  | \$2,571  |
| Law                          | County Attorney                                  | 19.75  | \$2,340  |
| Health                       | Secretary to the Commissioner                    | 56.18  | \$2,242  |
| Law                          | First Assistant County Attorney                  | 21.1   | \$2,009  |
| Public Works                 | Special Assistant to the Commissioner            | 29.83  | \$1,980  |
| County Executive             | Chief of Staff                                   | 23.75  | \$1,740  |
| County Executive             | Junior Administrative Consultant                 | 23.95  | \$1,288  |
| County Executive             | Deputy Press Secretary                           | 23.16  | \$1,245  |
| Youth Detention              | Deputy Commissioner                              | 15.77  | \$1,156  |
| County Executive             | Administrative Assistant to the Chief of Staff   | 27.43  | \$1,087  |
| County Executive             | Secretarial Assistant - County Executive         | 26.23  | \$885    |
| County Executive             | Junior Administrative Consultant                 | 17.97  | \$876    |
| County Executive             | Legislative Liaison                              | 14.62  | \$786    |
| County Executive             | Administrative Assistant to the Chief of Staff   | 17.1   | \$784    |
| County Executive             | Secretary to the Deputy County Executive         | 15.56  | \$538    |
| Personnel                    | Personnel Specialist                             | 7.92   | \$436    |
| County Executive             | Secretarial Assistant - County Executive         | 13.42  | \$429    |
| Personnel                    | Training Coordinator                             | 5.13   | \$276    |
| Budget and Management        | Coordinator of Grants and Program Administration | 4      | \$266    |

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