

Remarks by NY State Troopers PBA President Thomas H. Mungeer on February 10, 2021 regarding the 2021-2022 Executive Budget

Members of the Legislature, thank you for allotting me time to present important information on behalf of all New York State Troopers as well as the citizens of this state.

My name is Thomas Mungeer, and I am honored to represent 6,000 active and retired Troopers and State Police Supervisors in my position as President of the New York State Troopers PBA, the labor union representing those dedicated public servants.

The NYSTPBA has historically taken a strong stance in advocating for more Troopers to be added to the New York State Police. We are referring to manpower levels of sworn members, the men and women who wear the gray uniform, patrol our highways, and respond to emergencies.

The proposed 2021-2022 Executive Budget does not provide for any new State Police Academy recruit classes to help fill in staffing gaps. The State Police has not hired any new Troopers since 2019 and in the absence of an Academy class, our attrition rates continue to compound, bringing us to levels of depleted manpower we haven't seen in more than a decade. It takes at least 18 months to "make a Trooper," if you will, when you combine the time necessary to complete background checks, reassign training and other staff back to the Academy, undergo six months of training at the Academy, and then complete another three months of field training. Given that there is no money budgeted for this year, the earliest that we could have new Troopers on the road with their "boots on the ground" is 2023. In this scenario, it will take years for the State Police to restore the number of sworn members to appropriate levels. Simply stated, if the number of Troopers continues to decrease, there will be serious public safety issues.

With fewer Troopers on road patrol, response times are going to be slower. Here are a few questions to ponder when you think of the impact this will have on everyday situations. Will a Trooper have back-up available when faced by a weapon-wielding criminal? How long will citizens have to wait for help because not enough Troopers are on road patrol due to low staffing?

Fewer Troopers on the road will endanger not only the public, but also the brave and dedicated Troopers who put their lives on the line each and every day. The reason we became New York State Troopers in the first place was because we care about the safety of you, your friends and family, and the communities across the state. Being a New York State Trooper is a very dangerous and unpredictable job, and the risks would not be worth it if we didn't feel strongly about serving and protecting the public. That's why I must speak out about the consequences of not having adequate manpower for sworn members of the New York State Police to properly do their jobs. You must ask yourselves: what price am I willing to pay for the safety of my constituents?

Besides having adequate patrols throughout the state, another area that needs legislative attention is the need for uniform, standardized yearly training for all police officers to ensure that all officers are aware of changes in applicable laws, apprehension methods and overall law enforcement policy changes. I am requesting that a committee be formed under the auspices of the Division of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS) to mandate this training for all police officers statewide to bring organization to the patchwork of policies and mandates that exist now. The citizens of this state deserve nothing less than to be protected by well-trained professionals.

Thank you for your time and consideration.