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Lawmakers demand audit of MTA

Mid-Hudson officials, business leaders protest payroll tax

*By Jenny Lee-Adrian
Poughkeepsie Journal*

State assemblymen Marc Molinaro, R-Red Hook, and Greg Ball, R-Carmel, are calling for a forensic audit of the Metropolitan Transportation Authority in light of the payroll tax imposed on businesses, nonprofits and local governments.

The MTA bailout bill, which passed this month, requires an independent audit to be done of the agency's finances beginning every two years after 2009.

But Ball and Molinaro want it to be done sooner.

"We're saying it has to occur now," Molinaro said. "We demand the audit."

Ball emphasized the need for a forensic review to look for criminal accounting.

"Had there been dutiful accounting, we wouldn't have been here today," Ball said.

Ball, Molinaro, town supervisors, business leaders and county legislators gathered in front of the Poughkeepsie Railroad Station Thursday to talk about the issue.

The two assemblymen and the mid-Hudson GOP delegation had signed a letter and sent it to Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver, Senate Majority Leader Malcolm Smith and Gov. David Paterson to request the audit.

Town of East Fishkill Supervisor John Hickman supports the audit. He lambasted the payroll tax, in which businesses, nonprofits and governments in the 12-county MTA region will have to pay 34 cents for every \$100 of payroll.

"You know they call us the Empire State. Well, it's the Vampire State and we need help," Hickman said.

Audra Gerty, Dutchess County Regional Chamber of Commerce executive vice president and chief financial officer, said it would be easy for Dutchess businesses to move to Ulster and other counties that don't have the payroll tax.

Additional Facts

ON THE WEB

Signatures are being gathered for a petition to audit the MTA. Visit <http://auditthemta.com> — a Web site the Mid-Hudson GOP launched— to sign.
