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Molinaro, Ball want check on the MTA

*By Jenny Lee-Adrian
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BEACON - Assemblymen Marc Molinaro, R-Red Hook, and Greg Ball, R-Carmel, are calling for a fiscal oversight control board to increase the Metropolitan Transportation Authority's accountability and efficiency.

Molinaro and Ball have continued to fight against the MTA payroll tax, which, according to a Poughkeepsie Journal analysis of labor data, will cost Dutchess County about \$17.5 million. They were at the Beacon train station Monday to push for the control board and continue the call for a forensic audit of MTA finances.

The payroll tax affects businesses, nonprofits, schools and local governments, Ball said.

"But, everyone from nonprofits to schools have to fight back," Ball said.

Asked how an audit could be completed and spending cuts made this year, Molinaro was confident the tasks could be done. "We can postpone the payroll tax," he said.

Gov. David Paterson, Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver and ousted Majority Leader Malcolm Smith devised the MTA bailout plan.

Reforms in the plan

Division of the Budget spokesman Jeffrey Gordon said Paterson and the Legislature enacted significant reforms to improve the MTA's transparency.

"(The governor) will continue to work with the Legislature to ensure that the changes enacted into law succeed in strengthening the state's ability to oversee and monitor the MTA's operations," Gordon said.

Lex Harvey, general manager of Mountainview Garden Apartments in the Town of Fishkill, opposes the payroll tax.

"It's a tax on top of a tax on top of a tax," he said.

Ball and Molinaro support a board that would freeze salaries and benefits for MTA employees, approve MTA contracts totaling more than \$100,000, resolve MTA labor grievances and conduct forensic audits of MTA finances.

Dutchess County Regional Chamber of Commerce President and CEO Charles North and county Legislator John Forman, R-Beacon, also voiced opposition to the payroll tax.