

## Retired M/Cs seeking pension parity

Albany

Advocates seeking pension increases for roughly 3,000 non-union state workers who retired after 2009 didn't find success during the just-finished legislative session but said they will push ahead in their quest to garner benefits from delayed pay increases that made up for an earlier freeze.

Those employees, largely in the Management/Confidential category, left the payroll before other M/Cs received increases that had earlier gone to unionized workers.

The union increases were withheld from non-union employees in the wake of the 2008 Recession.

Union members eventually got new contracts with negotiated raises but the M/Cs weren't addressed until 2016.

"We've introduced numerous pieces of legislation," said Joe Sano, executive director of the Organization of Management Confidential Employees, or OMCE.

The lag started during the administration of former Gov. David Paterson, who instituted a widespread pay freeze following the 2008 financial crash.

In the meantime, many left due to a retirement incentive that was offered. The non-union workers eventually received raises but those who retired in the interim didn't have the increases reflected in their pension payments, which were based on prior salaries.

M/Cs can be highly paid managers or those in clerical or other positions who have access to personnel records or other sensitive documents and are considered to be in "confidential" positions.

One proposal, Sano said, is to pay the affected retirees an additional \$70 per month.

The length of the payment could vary, depending on when people retired. Most M/Cs reached "parity" or received raises that caught them up with the union increases by 2016.

Another idea was to provide a tax credit but it was complicated by the fact state pensions aren't subject to state income taxes.

Another difficulty in getting legislation to help the non-union retirees, though, stemmed from a recently adopted legislative policy.

When pension boosts are recommended, actuaries from the start of the process now submit an estimate of the long-term cost.

That used to happen after such bills were moving forward or passed.

Lawmakers, who are often close allies with public-sector unions, typically offer a variety of state or municipal pension enhancements although few actually become law each year.

Such pension "sweeteners" often fall off the table during final budget or legislative negotiations or are vetoed as being too costly.