



Astorino to veto board's tiered health plan

WHITE PLAINS — County Executive Rob Astorino today said that he would veto a tiered **health care** contribution plan that was approved by the Board of Legislators last night.

"I think the Board of Legislators has taken a great step backwards," Astorino said this afternoon. "I think we've got to send the message. ... We can't tinker around the edges."

Astorino, who appeared before The Journal News/Lohud.com Editorial Board, said the board's plan was "convoluted" and exempts too many workers, making it unfair to some.

"It saves far less **money** and it's unfair to employees and taxpayers," Astorino said.

The county board, by a 9-7 vote Monday night, signed off on tiered contribution model that favors longer-serving workers and requires others to kick in from 5 percent to 15 percent.

Affected workers will start paying July 1, but it end Dec. 31.

The board's tiered approach, which is considered a compromise to Astorino's 15 percent across-the-board plan, required nonunion managers to pay 5 percent to 15 percent of their health insurance premiums depending on how long they have worked for the county, while exempting workers with more than 20 years of **service**.

It also allowed elected officials to voluntarily contribute 15 percent.

The board's plan was similar to Astorino's approach in that it includes 416 workers in the Board of Legislators and its staff, the **District Attorney's Office**, Westchester Community College, the judiciary and all departments under the county executive.

Because of the different tiers, however, it would save less. The estimated six-month **savings** — roughly \$300,000 with the board's plan versus \$600,000 with Astorino's — is considered small given the county's financial challenges, but necessary in tackling some of those issues.

Health-care benefits now cost the county \$148.8 million, up from nearly \$68 million in 2000.

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