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## **Westchester exec Astorino threatens CSEA with more layoffs, union rejects claim of stalling**

**WHITE PLAINS** — Westchester County Executive Rob Astorino on Tuesday accused the county's largest union of stalling contract negotiations and threatened more layoffs if progress isn't made.

Astorino's response comes after the CSEA recently declared an impasse in negotiations and after a very public battle where the Republican county executive has unsuccessfully called on union members to pay a portion of their health-care premiums.

Now, they'll need a mediator to expedite talks.

"As long as union leaders keep insisting that taxpayers pick up the entire \$100 million cost of their members' health care, the county will have no choice but to eliminate more and more jobs going forward," Astorino said. "We can't employ people that we can't pay for. The math doesn't work any other way. ... The CSEA's behavior shows a complete lack of seriousness and respect for the collective bargaining process. Offering the smallest possible contribution – and then withdrawing even that miniscule concession – proves the union's leaders do not understand the financial realities facing everyone in Westchester."

Astorino's rebuke of the union comes on the heels of the Board of Legislators approving a \$1.69 billion budget that includes 40 to 43 layoffs. In his proposal, Astorino had called for 210 layoffs, but lawmakers restored about 180 of those jobs. There are eight county unions, and six are working with expired contracts. Two others including CSEA, which has about 3,800 members, have contracts that expire this month.

Union leaders have consistently said they would not talk about details of negotiations publicly and CSEA's president, Karen Pecora, reiterated that Tuesday but called Astorino a bully who was focused on one aspect of a contract when there are many more.

"He's not telling the whole truth," she said. "We're not stalling. We've worked very hard to put together a team" of negotiators. "If he wants to have a public war in the media," she added, "we're not going to do it. We're not going to have a war of words in the media."

Because health insurance coverage is a complex issue that affects workers and their families in profound ways, it became clear that a mediator was needed to assist in a fair discussion of this and other important issues, she said.