

Inside NY City Hall

Mike's slasher speech stuns Council into silence

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MAYOR BLOOMBERG brandished a sword at city workers in his State of the City speech yesterday, vowing to cut their raises, bonuses and pensions.

He said former Mayor Ed Koch would push for pension changes on the city's behalf in Albany, riding on the coattails of Gov. Cuomo's fiscal reform message.

"Our message to Albany is: we pay the bills, but let us get better prices," Bloomberg said. "The only way we will be able to afford raises for city workers in the future is if we can find some savings in our pension and health care bills."

Bloomberg's 10th annual speech, at Staten Island's newly restored St. George Theatre, made no mention of the city's botched blizzard response last month.

Instead, it had some small but intriguing ideas — like letting New Yorkers hail livery cabs on the street in outer boroughs and forgiving health inspection fines for restaurants that earn an A.

The mayor also wants to merge the city's five pension systems, raise new non-uniformed workers' retirement age to 65 and eliminate \$12,000 annual bonuses for new uniformed workers.

Controller John Liu, who oversees the pension funds, said the mayor should work with public-sector unions to cut costs instead of making demands.

"It's also not accurate to characterize

pensions as generous," Liu said. "Let's have them at the table as opposed to just keeping them on the outside and demonizing them from the inside."

The proposals drew a muted response from City Council members, many of whom were elected with strong union help — and sat on their hands instead of applauding.

"A lot of union representatives [were] sitting right behind us, so they were not clapping," said Councilman Peter Val-lone (D-Queens). "He [Bloomberg] is one of the few people with the guts to say what he said regarding pension reform."

The mayor also called for Albany to change the law requiring teacher layoffs to be based on seniority, not merit — which drew a furious response from Michael Mulgrew, head of the United Federation of Teachers.

"The mayor now wants to be able to lay them off because they cost the city too much," Mulgrew said. "It followed the whole speech in terms of the mayor saying that we have to protect businesses."

Public Advocate Bill de Blasio said Bloomberg needs to change his approach if he wants to get results.

"He's only going to get this done with the labor movement, with Albany," de Blasio said. alisberg@nydailynews.com

DAILY NEWS NYDailyNews.com

Thursday, January 20, 2011 19



He'd raise retirement age to 65 for non-uniformed workers, hold the line on tax increases

By TOM WROBLESKI
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As hard economic times continue to lash New York, Mayor Michael Bloomberg yesterday threw down the gauntlet to Albany, saying that reforming the pension system is vital to the city's economic survival.

Delivering a State of the City address rich in Staten Island touches at the historic

St. George Theatre, Bloomberg said the city no longer can afford to pay public employees such generous benefits.

"The only way to protect pensions for our city workers," he said, "is to reform the system so that we can afford it, and at the same time afford the vital services that New Yorkers want and depend on."

The city is facing a \$2.5 billion deficit.

Bloomberg, delivering his 10th State of the City speech, wants to raise the retirement age to 65 for non-uniformed workers hired in the future.

He also wants the city to negotiate pensions as part of collective bargaining. Currently, state officials decide benefits for city workers.

Said Bloomberg, "Again, our message to Albany is: We pay the bills, but let us get better prices."

He said he would not sign a contract with salary increases unless they are tied to benefit reforms.



Guest speaker, Anthony (Tony) Perone, President of the National 10-13 Association and a member of the Board on the Civil Service Alliance informs the organization that:

1. State Approval is necessary for Pension reform.
2. Retirees are not included in the mayor's speech on the Variable Supplement reform.
3. Retirees have won many court cases when it comes to a modification or reduction in their pension benefits that were negotiated while they were in active service