

## Chairman Bill Samuels: Urging Governor Cuomo to Sign Bill Restoring Health Benefits for NYCOTB Retirees

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Thursday, September 13, 2012

[Bill Samuels](#) <sup>[1]</sup>

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**New York, NY** – Bill Samuels, founder of the reform Albany organization [New Roosevelt](#) <sup>[2]</sup>, today called on Governor Cuomo to pass the latest Albany assembly bill designed to bring an immediate solution for the more nearly 1,000 New York City Off Track Betting retirees who lost their health benefits last year when the system was shutdown. Some OTB retirees are currently paying more than \$2200 month, to receive medical coverage on their own, an amount that exceeds many of their individual monthly pensions.

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During the last legislative session, Governor Cuomo [vetoed](#) <sup>[3]</sup> an assembly bill passed by Albany lawmakers that would have restored these vital health benefits citing that the bill had no appropriation mechanism to pay for the continuation of benefits. The bill had broad support from lawmakers and unions such Local District Council 37, its parent union AFSCME, Teamsters Local 858 and the AFL-CIO. The [current bill](#) <sup>[3]</sup>, which also has wide union support, resolves the earlier funding issue and awaits the Governor's signature.

"I am all for pension and benefits reform when done in a proper and judicious manner that looks ahead at future retirees, whether in the public or private sector. However, it is a dangerous precedent to not fulfill the promise of pension and health benefits made to workers who entered

the system while it was in existence,” Samuels said. “My father, Howard Samuels was the first chairman of the NYCOTB under Mayor John Lindsay, and he would be appalled, as am I, that nearly 40 years later, the government is breaking its promise to these retirees by not continuing their health benefits when they are most needed.”

After the shutdown of NYCOTB in December 2010, nearly a thousand retiree families have been without health benefits. As the AFL-CIO laid out in their [memo](#) [4] supporting the current legislation, “When NYCOTB closed on December 7, 2010, retirees of the entity were stripped of their health and supplemental benefits. These hard working employees, through no fault of their own, lost their access to health care as a result of years of neglect and poor management at OTB. They were unfairly forced to bear the brunt of the failure of NYCOTB management to right its own ship.

NYCOTB employees were assured if they retired from the Corporation, they and their dependents would receive these benefits. Upon closure, the promise was broken, resulting in extreme financial hardship – threatening the health and lives of NYCOTB retirees and their dependents.”

Samuels continued, “When an opportunity arises to properly take care of workers that have dedicated themselves to their job and have trusted their employer, either in the government or private sector, it is our responsibility, and part of our greater social compact, to help out if we can. And in this instance we have the ability to do so.”

For more information about the New Roosevelt, go to [www.newroosevelt.com](http://www.newroosevelt.com) [5]

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Pensions

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[3] [http://assembly.state.ny.us/leg/?default\\_fld=&bn=A09869&term=&Summary=Y&Actions=Y](http://assembly.state.ny.us/leg/?default_fld=&bn=A09869&term=&Summary=Y&Actions=Y)

[4] <http://nysafclio.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/Memo-26-OTB-Health-Reimbursement.pdf>

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