

# Murphy wants Navy office in Willowbrook

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WASHINGTON — Rep. John M. Murphy has launched a plan to relocate Brooklyn's naval resale system office to vacant space at the Staten Island Developmental Center at Willowbrook as an alternative to putting the billion-dollar-a-year operation in Fort Wadsworth.

Aides said yesterday that the congressman already has cleared the new plan for bringing the office to Staten Island with city and state officials and even has discussed the idea by telephone with Gov. Carey, an old political ally.

According to the aides, Murphy initiated the alternative proposal earlier this month shortly after former Borough President Robert Connor, now a deputy assistant secretary of the Navy, announced that Fort Wadsworth was being considered as a site for the resale office.

Murphy rejected Connor's proposal arguing that it would hobble the plan to integrate the military post into the Gateway National Recreation Area system when the Army abandons the base later this year.

But since then, Murphy said in a statement yesterday, "We have both agreed that moving it (the Brooklyn office) to Willowbrook would be best for all concerned." The integrity of Gateway as a recreational and historic facility would be preserved while Staten Island would get the economic benefit from the nearly 800 jobs the resale office would provide," the congressman added.

Reached at the Pentagon, Connor said he had contacted the state Economic Development office about making room for the Navy at the Island institution for the retarded and will visit the facility soon, perhaps as early as next week.

"Fort Wadsworth was our first choice but it's not possible, and it looks to me like this is a logical fallback situation," Connor said. He added, however, that "this is not a sure thing because we still don't know exactly what's available at Willowbrook."

The sprawling developmental center, once the home of more than 6,000 retarded persons, is being phased out by

the state in compliance with a federal court order. According to Murphy's office, there is "plenty of empty space" at the facility.

The resale office is currently housed in cramped, ramshackle quarters on Third Ave. in Brooklyn. Among other things, the office runs the Navy's post exchange system, a network of retail stores and supermarkets whose annual sales total \$1.6 billion.

The facility employs at least 740 full-time workers, including about 70 Islanders, and hires additional personnel in the summer. Its annual payroll is about \$15 million.

Connor, the project officer for the transfer of the operation, said the Navy was also giving serious consideration to a site in the Chicago area. But he said Navy planners would prefer to keep the office in the New York metropolitan area because most of the employees live in the region.

"If moved to Chicago, only half of them would go there," Connor said.

In a letter to Carey mailed yesterday, Murphy urged the governor to "move quickly" to insure the retention of the Navy outlet in the city. The congressman also reiterated his opposition to the Fort Wadsworth site, maintaining that "the introduction of a vast enterprise such as the retail office...in the area cannot be tolerated."

Murphy said he envisions the 260-acre base at the new headquarters for Gateway's administrative office, which is now at Floyd Bennett Field in Queens.

Aides said that while the congressman felt the sales office would destroy the integrity of Fort Wadsworth as a park, "he is not about to turn his back on the opportunity to bring such a lucrative thing to Staten Island."