

## Senator calls research center a 'luxury we can't afford'

# Willowbrook institute is challenged

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ALBANY — A Brooklyn senator says the state should close the Institute for Basic Research in Willowbrook and use the savings to house the homeless and keep day-care centers open.

"I think the research is all fine and good — in good economic times," said Sen. Major Owens, D-Brooklyn. "But in these times, with day-care centers closing because of budget cuts and with hundreds of homeless without

shelter, I think it's a luxury we can't afford."

The Institute for Basic Research, which has conducted research into the causes and treatment of mental retardation since 1970, is allocated \$7.96 million in the 1982-83 state budget approved by the Legislature last week.

Eugene Potter, deputy director for administration at the 400-employee institute, said the center has made major scientific advances. It recently unco-

vered a genetic connection to mental retardation and earlier helped develop an enzyme test to diagnose retardation in babies.

"Philosophically, I'm opposed to reductions in research funds," Potter said. "Obviously, if one is successful you not only reduce human suffering, but obtain substantial savings in terms of the cost of long-term care."

But Owens said there "has never" been a cost-benefit analysis of the institute's work.

"Besides, I think this research

is basically the responsibility of the federal government and private foundations," the senator said. "This work benefits the whole country, yet New York State taxpayers are the only one's paying for it."

Potter contends, however, that the institute is also the recipient of over \$1 million in federal research grants.

"We do important work and I think we should be allowed to continue," said Potter, who offered to take Owens on a tour of the facility.