

State still plans firings at SIDC

ALBANY (AP) — Officially, the state still plans to go ahead with the firing next month of about 300 Staten Island Development Center workers, along with another 150 at a similar facility upstate.

However, officials with the state's Office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disability (OMRDD), which runs the centers, are reportedly attempting to find new jobs for the Willowbrook workers and for employees of the Craig Developmental Center in Livingston County, located in New York's Finger Lakes region.

According to Ron Tarwater of the state's Office of Employee Relations, OMRDD Commissioner Arthur Y. Webb is investigating the availability of jobs for the soon-to-be laid-off workers.

The rehiring plan can be seen as part of a broader trend. Its result is that Gov. Mario M. Cuomo's plans to eliminate more than 10,000 jobs has so far meant permanent job losses for less than 500 state workers, far fewer than the governor originally expected to fire.

When Cuomo first advanced his employee reduction plan in February, he estimated that almost 7,000 state workers would need to be laid off to meet a goal of reducing the state work force by about 14,000 jobs.

Since then, however, a combination of factors — including opposition from members of the state Legislature and public employee union leaders — has meant a sharp reduction in the number of state employees actually thrown out of work.

And yesterday, Cuomo aides confirmed that the governor had decided to forego a plan to save an extra \$5.5 million before the end of the current fiscal year on March 31 by either instituting a voluntary furlough program for state workers or with 1,000 new layoffs.

Cuomo said he felt state workers had already made "a massive contribution" and that he "wouldn't want to ask them to make another" to help the state save money.

Cuomo spokesman Timothy Russert said officials within the state Budget Division felt they could come up with the extra \$5.5 million that would have been saved between now and the end of the current fiscal year.

As it stands, according to Ron Tarwater, only 747 full-time state employees were ever fired by the state. And of those, according to the OER spokesman, all but 484 have been given other state jobs since they were fired.

Cuomo first talked about firing almost 7,000 state workers as he presented his proposed 1983-84 state budget to the Legislature. He said it was necessary to help close a looming \$1.8 billion budget gap.

In addition to the layoffs, Cuomo said he wanted to institute an early retirement incentive program and make use of normal attrition to reach his goal of about 14,000 fewer jobs on a state work force of more than 200,000 workers.

As a result of his proposals, Cuomo was greeted all across the state by public employee union pickets who said his plans would not only cost state workers their jobs, but would hurt state services.

As opposition mounted in the public employee unions, members of the state Legislature also began to raise objections. It wasn't long before Cuomo had revised his targeted goal and was talking about a work force reduction of 10,500 jobs.

Nonetheless, administration budget aides were still talking about the need to fire perhaps 4,000 state workers to meet even the reduced goal.

At the time, at least one top aide to state Senate Minority Leader Manfred Ohrenstein, D-Manhattan, insisted privately that Cuomo's talk of firing state workers was more publicity stunt than a reflection of reality. He insisted, even then, that few state workers would end up being fired.

The necessity to fire fewer state workers than originally anticipated was due, in part, to the success of the early retirement incentive program. While Cuomo aides had hoped to get about 3,400 workers to take advantage of the program, about 6,400 actually did. Administration critics claim the Cuomo staff must have known the retirement program would have been that successful.

By the middle of 1983, Cuomo had managed to reduce the number of state workers by about 10,000. However, by then complaints began to mount about staffing problems at OMRDD facilities and state mental hospitals. And New Yorkers began to complain about waiting too long at Department of Motor Vehicle offices.

It wasn't long before Cuomo's budget division had authorized the hiring of about 1,400 new workers to help alleviate prob-

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lems in those three areas.

As it stands, the total number of paychecks currently being issued by the state stands at 224,166, according to Pam Orzechowski, a spokeswoman for state Comptroller Edward Regan. That compares to about 221,155 issued in January.

The total biweekly state payroll cost in January stood at \$162.7 million while it's currently about \$174.8 million, Ms. Orzechowski said.

However, she also noted that the total state payroll figures included checks for employees of the state Legislature, the judiciary, state authorities and for federally funded jobs — positions not considered part of the Cuomo work force reduction program.

Nonetheless, the state is issuing about 3,000 more paychecks every two weeks than

it was when Cuomo took office and began planning to reduce the size of the state work force.

Wayne Diesel, first deputy commissioner for the state budget division, said that the number of state paychecks issued wasn't an accurate gauge of the success of the Cuomo job-reduction program.

He noted that the Cuomo administration has continued state programs to encourage more "job-sharing," a situation which can mean two or more paychecks being issued for what is, in reality, one job.

Diesel said that administration officials, when evaluating the success of the Cuomo work force reduction program, look at the total number of state employees paid for directly by state taxpayer dollars. In January there were "about 182,000 and there are now a bit more than 172,000," he said.