

# Mayors leave Albany 'hopeful'

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As the state budget deadline grows closer, mayors representing the six major New York cities came to Albany to plead their case and left the Capitol mildly encouraged.

Edward Farrell, executive director of the State Conference of Mayors, said the coalition was able to raise the consciousness of legislators and "while there was plenty of discussion, there was no commitment."

Representing approximately one half of the population in New York, the coalition's legislative agenda emphasized restoring revenue sharing, tax relief and changes in the state school aid formula.

Anna Marengo, spokesman for New York Mayor David Dinkins, said he found last week's meetings successful because individually the mayors make their voices heard, but together they made a stronger impact.

Farrell said the high visibility of the mayors from New York, Albany, Buffalo, Rochester, Syracuse and Yonkers, drew the attention of the public and media to issues.

Albany Mayor Thomas Whalen said he hopes the budget will restore the "draconian" cuts in state aid and called the meetings a good opportunity to present a unified approach to leadership in both houses.

Buffalo Mayor James Griffin said that while it was good to see the six leaders stand united, he will have to wait for the budget to see if anything was gained.

Spokesman Bill Stevens said Senate Majority Leader Ralph Marino, R-Muttontown, thinks the coalition "brought attention to their perceived needs and suggested some solutions."

According to Stevens, Marino promised to do everything he can to help the mayors, within the context of the

budget.

Assemblyman Hector Diaz, D-Bronx, chair of the Cities Committee, welcomed the forum, saying the coalition "might begin to have their collective voice heard in the state Capitol."

Optimistic that the issues raised by the coalition will be carefully considered before the budget is released, Senate Cities Committee Chair Frank Padavan, R-Queens, said the mayors effectively presented their argument.

"Let's hope the friendliness we got translates into results when it counts."

Under State Finance Law, localities are to receive eight percent of total state tax collections. In 1992-93 localities received \$489 million instead of the \$2.2 billion called for by the law. Members of the coalition asked that some of the additional revenue that the governor has found be returned to localities.

One reason, they said, is that overall the six cities have had to raise real estate taxes during the past three years from an average of nine percent to an average of 28 percent.

"We really got a shellacking on this," said Mayor Dinkins.

Rochester Mayor Thomas Ryan suggested that real estate transfer taxes or utility gross receipt taxes would be more favorable than burdening property owners. The Legislature would have to approve such measures.

"All we're asking for is permission to help ourselves," said Whalen.

The governor has proposed consolidating school aid distribution formulas. The City of New York has filed suit to legally block cuts that would reduce aid to districts statewide by \$52 million. Dinkins said Cuomo's reforms, which would cap the growth a district could receive each year at 1 percent, are unfair to cities.