



Brian U. Stratton  
Mayor

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**\*\* PLEASE NOTE CORRECTED PARAGRAPH IN BOLD**

**STRATTON, BENNETT APPLAUD GOVERNOR'S**  
**VETO OF POLICE DISCIPLINE BILL**

*Mayor, Public Safety Commissioner Say Spitzer Veto Ensures the Continuation of Police Discipline and Management Reforms in Schenectady*

**SCHENECTADY** -- Mayor Brian U. Stratton and Public Safety Commissioner Wayne Bennett today applauded Governor Eliot Spitzer's veto of Assembly Bill 8139, thus preserving the right for the City of Schenectady to independently administer and determine police disciplinary procedures outside of collective bargaining and arbitration.

"Governor Spitzer's decisive action is good news for the citizens of Schenectady," said Mayor Stratton. "Indeed, our community should be grateful to the Governor for standing up and doing what is right on this issue. As the Governor clearly stated in his veto message, discipline in a local police department needs to be vested solely in the hands of those who manage that department on a daily basis, and not determined by appointed arbitrators who are unfamiliar with police issues and the particular needs of the local community."

**Mayor Stratton said the City of Schenectady has had a dysfunctional history of police disciplinary actions being undone by arbitrators and the conviction of six (6) officers during the past ten years, all of which eroded public confidence in the police.**

"In a very real sense, Schenectady is the poster-child for need for the Governor's veto," the Mayor said. Without the ability to discipline officers free of second guessing by arbitrators, our ability to restore public confidence would have been forever lost. The Governor's veto of this bill will give Schenectady the tools necessary to restore discipline within the police department and ensure that officers who violate the public trust are dealt with fairly and appropriately.

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I am pleased and grateful to Governor Spitzer and State Department of Criminal Justice Commissioner Denise O'Donnell for listening to our appeals and for taking Schenectady's experiences into consideration in the decision to veto the bill," the Mayor added.

Mayor Stratton, who is a strong supporter of organized labor and labor unions, said that local police management presents a unique set of circumstances to remove discipline from the union's collective bargaining process. "In the case of Schenectady and the members of our police department who have a unique set of responsibilities and authorities in the community, there is an exceptional need for vigilant and decisive oversight by a sole management authority," he said.

Mayor Stratton called the Governor's veto a major turning point in his efforts to bring significant and lasting management and disciplinary reforms to the Schenectady Police Department. In May, the Mayor reinstated the position of Public Safety Commissioner in Schenectady with the appointment of former State Police Superintendent Wayne Bennett.

In his first weeks on the job, Commissioner Bennett recommended to the Mayor that Schenectady use a recent New York State Court of Appeals decision to take administrative responsibility for police discipline in Schenectady. The 2006 court decision enables the City of New York and eight second-class cities in the state to vest disciplinary powers within the position of a public safety or police commissioners or other designated local officials, rather than determine discipline through collective bargaining and arbitration.

Commissioner Bennett said the Governor's veto is critical to his ability to improve the management of the department and administer discipline in a fair, timely and consistent manner. "With his veto, Governor Spitzer has given us the tools necessary to continue restoring the reputation of the Schenectady Police Department. The Governor clearly recognizes that discipline issues should be handled by police professionals at the local level to ensure that officers are held to the highest standards of professionalism in the best interests of the public and the department."

Under the Mayor's direction, Commissioner Bennett said he will continue to make needed reforms to ensure that the Police Department functions efficiently and effectively, and to restore public confidence in the city's police operations.

"On behalf of the people of Schenectady, I want to thank the Governor for focusing on the real issues and working hard on behalf of New York's local governments," Mayor Stratton said.