

# Editorial

## Mayor's \$3.5B Surplus Set Aside A Wise Move

During the recent labor negotiations between the Metropolitan Transportation Authority and the Transport Workers Union, the issue standing in the way of a settlement was a proposal by the MTA to give future transit workers less health care coverage than that of their present brethren.

Likewise, at the start of new contract talks with the city's largest municipal union, 1 million-member DC 37, the Bloomberg administration said a reduction in pension costs might be necessary because the costs of entitlements which the city gives its employees are becoming unaffordable.

In both cases, the unions involved strongly resisted giving up benefits they had fought hard to win during years and years of bargaining sessions.

For many years in the recent past, a strong trend has steadily developed in private industry to take away the pensions of hundreds of thousands of workers and retirees, leaving most of them without the funds that had been expected to provide them and their loved ones with many happy retirement years.

Mayor Michael Bloomberg, in his budget presentation several weeks ago, indicated awareness of both this upsetting trend and future budget deficits. He wisely proposed a

revised four-year financial plan for the city calling for using an unexpected surplus of \$3.5 billion to address long-term health care costs, pay-go capital and debt reduction.

Almost half the surplus—\$2 billion—would be placed in a trust fund as a down payment on future health care costs for city retirees.

"We must seize this opportunity, marshal our current resources and work with our partners in government to make the structural changes necessary to the city budget to put our city on track for long term growth and fiscal stability," the mayor added in the budget message.

Previous mayors confronted with similar surpluses have had almost knee jerk reactions, allotting the funds to areas that could have been covered in the normal course of budget-making.

Indeed, there were some suggestions that the mayor follow that same course. This might have served a legitimate purpose, but would not have exhibited the same foresight.

Most officials in and out of government who opt for other uses for surplus do not come from the same business background as the mayor. The Mayor's budget surplus proposal reflects his business acumen and the same instincts that guided him in starting a business

venture from scratch and developing it into a successful, ongoing, very profitable enterprise.

City Council leaders, reacting to the mayor's proposal, stated they would study it before making a decision on it. The *Gazette* believes they should approve it for the same reasons which motivated the mayor to make it in the first place.

As he pointed out in his budget message, "Despite the city's strong economy and fiscal stability, significant risks exist in the out years."

Among these are the anticipated growth in government spending in near future years and the reality that pensions and fringe benefits now consume more than 62 percent of the total salaries for municipal employees and there are projected gaps of \$3.5 billion in Fiscal Years 2008 and 2009.

The mayor concludes: "Without long-term solutions to these recurring problems and structural shortfalls, the city will be plagued by a continuous boom-bust cycle that invariably causes painful budget cuts and tax increases.

The City Council will be looking at the same data as was the mayor when he proposed setting aside the \$3.5 billion surplus. The lawmakers must come to the same conclusion and approve his plan.

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## Letters

### Meat Under Glass

To The Editor:

About 6 years ago, when I first learned of the concept of in-vitro meat from a friend and fellow vegetarian, my initial reaction was revulsion. As a registered nurse/health advocate and vegetarian for many years, I could not imagine promoting a product I associated with pain, disease, and pollution.

After learning more about the process, though, I now believe that this technology has the potential to spare the suffering of tens of billions of animals per year and, at the same time, improve human health and reduce insult to the environment.

The technology involves painlessly taking a few cells from a live animal and putting them in a nutritious medium in which they will divide. Theoretically, a few cells can feed an entire nation.

I don't think, in a climate of paranoia about mad cow and avian flu, it's any accident that in-vitro meat has been in the news recently.

Using this technology, a pure product minus hormones, steroids, antibiotics, and pesticide residues would be created. In addition, since it would be produced in a completely controlled environment, there would be no mad cow disease, avian flu, salmonella, e-coli, and other flesh-borne diseases in the meat.

Aside from having a profound impact on tens of billions of animals' lives, the product would be healthier than factory-farmed meat. Moreover, the impact on the environment would be minimal compared to that caused by the huge amounts of waste and pollution generated by agribusiness.

Naturally, I wish the whole world would become vegan overnight. Since this is not likely

to happen, I find myself surer that supporting this technology is essential. To learn more about in-vitro meat, visit New-Harvest.org, or visit my Web site at Rrina.com.

Sincerely,  
Rina Deych, R.N.  
Brooklyn

### ACLU Is Mistaken

*A copy of the following letter to the executive director of the ACLU was received by the Gazette.*

Dear Mr. Anthony J. Romero:

You are as guilty of prejudging Judge Alito as you are of our president. How can you possibly give an honest evaluation of President Bush if you have been anti-Bush for years? It's like asking Osama bin Laden to give an honest appraisal of our way of life.

And I'll cite two glaring examples: the Patriot Act and wiretapping. You are more concerned with protecting the privacy of an individual than the safety of our country. If I were wiretapped, as an innocent person, I'd have nothing to fear. What was actually lost? A little privacy. Is that such a big deal? But our country remains safe, in spite of a little mistake. Is your organization perfect?

C'mon, with our borders inviting every shady character under the sun, the enemy might be living on your block. Yes, we must be forever vigil[ant] without undergoing a severe mental disorder.

Put your country first and the individual's rights secondary. There are many laws protecting its citizens. We are not living in a tyrannical state. Apparently I have more confidence in our country than you do.

Sincerely,  
John Carno

P.S. I was once a member until I saw the light.

### No Place For Politics

To The Editor:

I found it extremely appalling how some of our political leaders past and present took the time to speak ill at Coretta Scott King's funeral about President George W. Bush.

I especially take issue with former President Jimmy Carter who took a swipe at Bush for authorizing wiretaps. I thought he had more class.

It seems there were those there that did speak [who] used that opportunity to enhance their own political agendas [when] it should have been a time to remember Mrs. King's contribution to the Civil Rights movement and how she tried to keep the dream alive that Martin Luther King Jr. had envisioned and who worked to eradicate injustice.

It was not the place nor the time to air political differences. They ought to be ashamed of themselves. I think by doing what they did was not quite appropriate and was a disgrace and did dishonor the memory of Coretta Scott King who was a person of grace and compassion.

Here is something to think about: a person goes to a funeral has maybe some ill feeling toward a person or a relative at the funeral, yet the concern is about the one who has passed on and generally would not think of speaking badly about that person, for that would be considered not cool and quite disrespectful to that person's memory. It seems to me that those who engaged in Bush bashing need to be educated in the proper way to behave at a funeral and to realize there are other forums in which they can air their concerns and a funeral is not one of those forums.

Sincerely Yours,  
Frederick R. Bedell Jr.  
Bellerose