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# In Case You Missed It: "Post the bi-partisan Atlantic City intervention bill ... We need help now"

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**Letter on the Future of Atlantic City**  
Assembly Majority Leader Lou Greenwald  
PolitickerNJ

Mr. Speaker,

Over the last few weeks, I have spoken to many of our colleagues who are deeply concerned about the fate of Atlantic City. Virtually every one has communicated to me that they will not allow Atlantic City to go bankrupt or financially collapse, yet we are now sitting on the precipice of catastrophe. I am again pleading with you to post the bi-partisan Atlantic City intervention bill (A3326).

The facts of this situation are clear. Right now Atlantic City municipal employees are living week-to-week, uncertain of when their city is going to shut down and leave them jobless. As we learned this week, the city has so little money that they've been withholding funds from the school district to keep the municipality in operation. Soon the city will have to close schools and tell teachers to stay home. In fact, the NJEA applauded the state's action this week in ensuring that this doesn't become an immediate crisis for school children and their families across the city. As of today, the situation has grown so dire that the Education Law Center in Newark and the NJEA have stated that they are prepared to begin legal action to prevent city schools from closing.

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The Senate passed this bill 27-9 with bipartisan, statewide support. 20 of 21 New Jersey counties are represented by a Senator who voted in favor of this bill. This group includes well known and staunch supporters of organized labor and collective bargaining agreements like Senate Majority Leader Loretta Weinberg and Senators Ray Lesniak, Bob Gordon and Nellie Pou among others. These Senators supported this legislation because they understand that we are approaching the last opportunity to provide a lifeline to one of our most historic and beloved cities. Even Senator Brian Stack of your own county has stated that it would be "irresponsible" not to advance this bill.

Support for this legislation has come from across our state. The NJ Building and Construction Trades Council has endorsed pursuing this legislation, as has the President of Unite-HERE union Local 54, which represents casino employees. President Bob McDevitt, representing his union members, shared the sentiment of the region when he said in support of this bill "I do not want Atlantic City to flat-line any longer."

Every newspaper and major columnist that have taken a position have unanimously cited this intervention bill as necessary and appropriate. Even this morning, The Record editorialized in no uncertain terms that we should post the intervention and PILOT bills and save Atlantic City. They concluded rightfully: "Atlantic City is out of money and time. Once the dominoes start falling, everyone loses."

The argument that the state already has the authority to correct these circumstances is flawed. The state has had the authority to prevent certain municipal actions from taking place in Atlantic City. But certainly, as a matter of law, the state does not currently have the authority to proactively implement critical actions needed immediately to help stabilize the City's finances,

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A bill that waits 3-5 years to address all of Atlantic City's issues is not the answer. We need help now. The city is largely insolvent already and kicking the can down the road on real solutions is part of the reason we have reached this point. Many of the initiatives in your legislation would only be effective after years of noncompliance that have on multiple occasions been agreed to by the city but never implemented. The time for double-secret probation has long passed. As a result, the city cannot be trusted and the time for waiting is over.

Unlike the bi-partisan bill that this house has passed before, your PILOT legislation fails to protect school children by guaranteeing tax payments to the school district, which continues to place teachers and children at risk.

Stunningly, your bill has a provision to allow for the termination of collective bargaining. The presence of this concept in my bill is supposed to have been the cause of much of the inability for all parties to come to a resolution on this issue. If this is a core principle which must never be touched under any circumstance, I am worried that its inclusion in your bill means that over the last few weeks we have been putting politics and theatrics before people and principle.

By the time your proposed legislation comes to full effect, much of the damage will be done.

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If you had spoken to me or consulted any of the members of the region most affected by this crisis and informed us of your intent to craft a bill of your own, in the spirit of true compromise, many of the deeply troublesome issues in this bill could have been rectified.

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Many of our colleagues have told me that they share my worst fear – that Atlantic City goes bankrupt and damages the lives of untold thousands of the people we represent. They worry that the ripple effect caused by the collapse of Atlantic City or the region will negatively impact their towns and their constituents. They understand that action is needed immediately to prevent that outcome from happening.

Accordingly Mr. Speaker, after all of the public debate and with all of the above facts laid bare, I ask that you post the bi-partisan Atlantic City intervention bill for a vote so we can immediately begin working to avert the worst municipal and regional financial crisis of our lifetimes.

Full article [HERE](#).

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