

I'd like to speak about my concern about how my tax dollars are being spent on Economic Development.

For example, in past years New York State has donated millions of dollars in state aid to American Axle & Manufacturing, in hopes of creating or retaining good paying jobs. Unfortunately, it is clear that American Axle plans on abandoning New York State resulting in devastating consequences for the workers as well as harming our fragile Western New York economy.

Despite the fact that American Axle promised workers at the Buffalo Gear and Axle Facility that the plant would remain open and new work awarded in return for their sacrifice, AAM announced that it would close the Buffalo Plant even before the agreement ended.

The result is the loss of Buffalo's largest employer and the loss of 2,200 good paying jobs. The job loss figure does not include jobs that will be lost by businesses that provided support to the Buffalo Plant.

The work that was promised to the Buffalo Plant went to the new Axle Plant in Guanajuato (wah-nah-HWAH-toh), Mexico. Although AAM has yet to announce it, the work currently being performed at the Tonawanda Forge and Cheektowaga Facilities will also be transferred to the new Forge in Guanajuato, Mexico resulting in the loss of another 900 good paying jobs.

As was the case at the Buffalo Plant before workers agreed to concessions, it appears AAM is holding off on its announcement to close the Tonawanda and Cheektowaga Facilities as a way to extract another concessionary contract. Rumors are already circulating about AAM's management threatening workers at the Tonawanda and Cheektowaga Facilities with being "Buffaloed" if they refuse to agree to another round of concessions.

Although I feel it is important for New York State to support businesses large and small, I feel that our leaders have a responsibility to ensure the companies we support are supporting us.

I think in this budget and future budgets, New York State needs to extract some kind of guarantee that a company is committed to doing business in New York State before awarding it millions of tax payer dollars. If a company reneges on its commitment to New York State, I do not think that it would be unfair for the state to request a refund of any and all assistance including free power, tax incentives, training funds, grants, etc., given that company under false pretenses.

As a New York State Tax payer, it makes me sick to think that my tax dollars were used to finance American Axle's move to Mexico. It upsets me that my Tax dollars are being used to support a company without social conscience that uses threats, fear, and intimidation in order to increase their bottom line.

It is my sincere hope that New York State will use the money contained in this year's budget for economic development as a way to help New York State Businesses and not as some sort of corporate welfare system for profitable global corporations.