



The Honorable Andrew M. Cuomo, Governor of the State of New York
NYS State Capitol Building
Albany, NY 12224

26 July 2021

RE: S4523 / A6457 PBA NYS 20 Year Retirement Legislation

Dear Governor Cuomo,

Adirondack Wild: Friends of the Forest Preserve has worked closely with DEC Forest Rangers for decades. Protective of people, enhancing public safety and wild, natural resources, the DEC Forest Rangers and their colleagues, the Environmental Conservation Officers, provide educational service and enforcement guidance to benefit our majestic Forest Preserve.

As State Lands and Easements have grown, so has grown the acreage needing patrol, the number of emergencies, the number of hikers, paddlers and snowmobilers requiring education, aide and assistance. Yet, the number of Forest Rangers are no greater in number than fifty years ago. In 2020, just 124 DEC Forest Rangers conducted 492 search and rescue missions, extinguished 192 Wildfires and issued over 3,000 tickets. Over 10% of the Forest Ranger positions are currently vacant statewide. Recruitment and growth remain a tremendous challenge.

By signing and enacting into law this year's 20 Year Retirement Legislation (S4523 / A6457), you and your administration will strengthen the cause of equity across all police agencies. By signing the bill, you will facilitate recruitment and retention of a diverse pool of Forest Rangers and Environmental Conservation Officers. This legislation would help all of the State agencies in the PBA of NYS.

The status quo, meaning the untimely loss of hardworking Rangers and other Officers, is due in part to the current unequitable retirement plan. Therefore, Adirondack Wild: Friends of the Forest Preserve strongly supports S. 4523/A.6457, the 20-year retirement bill, and the PBA of NYS commitment to fielding a robust, diverse roster of Rangers and Officers trained and equipped to protect our precious public lands and the recreating public. Thank you for your consideration of this important legislation.

Very sincerely,

David Gibson, Managing Partner
Adirondack Wild: Friends of the Forest Preserve. POB 9247. Niskayuna. NY. 12309. 518.469.4081

Cc: Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins
Senator Andrew Gouardes
Assemblyman Peter Abbate