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# PEF NEWSCLIP

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ROGER BENSON QUOTED

## Union members push workplace safety bill

BY BOB CONNER  
Gazette Reporter

Unionized state workers demanded passage of a workplace safety bill at a rally Wednesday outside the Capitol.

Patty Kaufman, of Glenville, who works in the Justice Building collecting debts owed to the state, said: "We have had people come into the office threatening our employees."

She is a local president for the Civil Service Employees Association, and members of that union made up most of the crowd at the rally.

The CSEA and other unions favor passage of the Worksite Security Act. According to a CSEA statement, the bill "would require public employers with more than 20 employees to assess risk and develop a plan of action to prevent potential workplace violence. The bill would also establish a complaint procedure for workers to call attention to the potential for violence."

A similar bill was vetoed last year by Gov. George Pataki, who in a veto message cited "serious technical flaws." Some of these issues have been addressed by the sponsors, including Pataki's concern that the bill would jeopardize federal funding. However, it is not clear if it has been changed sufficiently for Pataki to now support and sign it.

The governor's press office Wednesday followed its usual practice of declining to comment on whether he will sign legislation. The Office of General Services also declined to comment about the issue of employee safety at state facilities, which OGS is responsible for.

The bill passed the Senate earlier this week. It is currently before an Assembly committee, and is also expected to pass that house.

At the rally, Roger Benson, president of the Public Employees Federation, said the Pataki administration has constantly

raised the issue of crime outside the workplace, and "All we're asking for is equity."

Kaufman said: "There's a strong need for workplace safety to protect the members of CSEA."

The CSEA statement cited the murder of four union members who worked in social services in Watkins Glen in 1992. The union has been running an advertising campaign, and said in one of the ads: "Although many people think workplace violence is random and unpredictable, there are a number of common factors that increase a worker's risk of violence. That means there are lots of ways to lower the risks by assessing the workplace and the way work is done."

The union said "homicide is the leading cause of death for women in the workplace," and that government workers are at a substantially higher risk than those in the private sector.

Protesters at the rally included a woman who was allegedly raped and kidnapped in 2004 at the Cass Residential Center in Rensselaerville. They said the woman has received insufficient support from both the state and the CSEA.

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