

**DAILY NEWS**

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MORTIMER B. ZUCKERMAN, *Chairman & Co-Publisher*FRED DRASNER, *Chief Executive Officer & Co-Publisher*HAROLD EVANS, *Vice Chairman & Editorial Director*DEBBY KRENEK, *Editor In Chief*ARTHUR BROWNE, *Managing Editor*MICHAEL GOODWIN, *Editorial Page Editor***O'Rourke's pork**

People who go into public service like to say they do it to help others. But in the case of former Westchester County Executive Andrew O'Rourke, it seems to have been to help himself.

When he retired last month to become a Court of Claims judge after 15 years as county executive, O'Rourke began collecting a \$113,000 salary on top of an \$80,000 pension. And he took a truckload of furniture originally paid for by taxpayers.

O'Rourke's greed has made him the poster boy for reforming two laws, one in Albany and another in Westchester.

Change 1: State law prohibits most government employees from collecting both a pension and a salary. But Gov. Pataki used a loophole in the state Retirement and Social Security Law to ask for a waiver so O'Rourke could collect his new salary and his pension. The waiver loophole must be closed.

Change 2: Broad interpretation of a Westchester County law intended to let departing officials keep mementos also allows them to purchase their office furnishings at absurd discounts. O'Rourke took a fax machine, brass lamps, walnut tables, sumptuous leather chairs, a refrigerator and many other items originally bought by taxpayers. He paid only \$5,075, a fraction of the value. And the money came not from his own pocket, but from campaign contributors. Pretty shady.

Westchester legislators owe it to taxpayers to clarify the law to bar officials from pillaging when they exit office. In the meantime, O'Rourke can save his reputation by giving back one of his two government incomes and returning the office loot. It's up to O'Rourke how history should judge him: as a dedicated public servant, or a greedy, self-serving pol.

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