

PUBLIC AUTHORITIES TRIMMING DOWN ON JOBS



The public authorities of New York, often referred to as shadow governments because of the spending of the tax dollars, may be dealing with a hit just like the rest of the public sector is currently dealing with. A recent review of state records provided information on employment within the public authority system, showing that employment peaked several years ago, back in 2009, when it was at 160,472. However, that number has since declined, falling to about 144,377 back in 2011. There is currently no data available for the number of individuals employed for this year. It is believed that the declines have occurred because of downsizing practices. The executive director for the Public Authorities Budget Office of the state, David Kidera, has said, "These all ebb and flow, up one year, down the next." Kidera believes that, in general, the employment number for authorities have stayed at a stable pace, even though there have been some declines. Part of his job includes collecting data for the employment of the authorities, along with the trends in employment as well. Records from September show that a total of 350 public authorities were reporting, during that time period, to the Authorities Budget Office. These individual vary from a number of different bureaucracies, including the MTA. The MTA is responsible for the operation of trains, buses, and subways in the New York area and employs a total of 71,000 individuals. Kidera says that even the biggest authorities have managed to see a decline in staff members over the past four years. For example, employment within the MTA shrunk from a total of 74,714 during 2009 to 71,556 during 2011. The NYC Health and Hospital Corporation also saw a decline, with the number of individuals employed going from 47,943 to 44,936 during the same exact time frame. A 2010 report has claimed that the public authorities are primarily responsible for over \$133 billion worth of public debt. Tracking these authorities is still something that is new, as the tracking of these organizations first started in 2009 when a law was passed. The law stated that the Authorities Budget Office would have the ability to set up inventory for both state and local authorities, along with finding out the mission statements for each of the organizations. Even though tracking is now available, there is still room for some improvements too. Richard Brodsky, who was once a Westchester Democratic Assemblyman, has said, "The net result of this has been a dramatic increase in transparency and efficiency." He also said, "But it's still a system that is largely shrouded in secrecy."