

## KEARNY MAY LAYOFF 11



It is fair to say that the city of Kearny, N.J. has been through a bit of a rollercoaster ride to try and stay in the black. In a situation that is not unlike many other cities and towns all over the nation their budget is being strained by a loss of revenue on two sides, as the state offers less money and sales/income tax revenues go down at the same time. The city has just come to terms with the unions for the police officers and the firefighters that were able to help those agencies avoid end of the year layoffs. That good news is paired with some bad news, the township now has to reenter into negotiations, this time with the union for the employees who are out of uniform and the union is already wary. The union is wary because they fear that an opening in the current contract will allow the city to shunt costs of health care to the workers, and create a large increase in what employees pay each week for their health insurance. These fears were created by the givebacks clause in the contract. The leaders of the Kearny Civil Service Council 11 are afraid that the clause, in conjunction with a New Jersey law passed last year will create the problem. The law in question basically requires each and every public employees to contribute more funding for their health insurance costs after their contracts are opened up to negotiation. The law was designed to help flagging budgets by shifting health costs off of the state and cities and instead putting in onto the workers. While the current contract does not expire until 2014, union leaders still have some pause for concern. Maryann Ryan, the president of Kearny Civil Service Council 11 told the following to a [reporter for NJ.com](#), "Last year we were the only ones who went in and agreed to givebacks. At that time, our contract was extended to 2014. If we open the contract for any reason, we immediately start to pay more for our health care." The mayor of the town is less concerned with the problem, and not just because he would not have the higher costs of health care, he told the same reporter that he did not believe that opening the contract would be needed in most cases. His exact words to the same reporter were, "I think that's an issue we can handle at the negotiating table without opening the collective bargaining agreement," Currently eleven members of the Kearny Civil Service Council 11 are facing layoffs on the last day of the year if the town and the union cannot come to some kind of an agreement before that time. In addition to a few other givebacks the town has asked the workers to agree to 26 furlough days. Those days would leave many departments closed on alternating Fridays. Only time will tell if the workers will make concessions or if their costs for health care coverage will rise.