

OTB — the long fight goes on

Gov. Cuomo vetoed a bill Sept. 23 that would have restored health benefits to New York City Off-Track Betting Corp. retirees, but DC 37 leaders remain hopeful that in the next session Albany lawmakers will bring relief.

"We are still fighting to make you whole," Local 2021 President Lenny Allen told retirees and former OTB employees at a meeting Oct. 5.

Cuomo's veto message acknowledged that OTB retirees "were left out in the cold and unprotected" without "the health insurance that they worked hard for," but he called the bill "flawed because it contains no appropriation authority."

"He did not say it was unconstitutional or cost too much, so the issue is not dead," Allen said, "and the union is still fighting for you."

When Albany failed to save the bankrupt NYC OTB last December, over 800 Local 2021 members lost jobs. DC 37 Executive Director Lillian Roberts and Allen have



HOPE: Catskills OTB President Donald Groth and Local 2021 President Lenny Allen talk with members Oct. 5 after membership meeting. Groth hopes to expand into New York City and hire laid-off members of Local 2021.

been relentlessly fighting for them. DC 37 went to court to restore the retirees' health benefits and now awaits a higher court's decision that could require the state to reinstate and pay for their health insurance.

DC 37 Health and Security Plan Counsel Audrey Browne said that after Oct. 31, the plan can no longer provide retirees' supplemental benefits such as audiology, dental, drug, vision and MELS.

In a fight for jobs, Allen reached an agreement with Catskills OTB President Donald Groth for Groth to hire Local 2021 members by expanding into the five boroughs.

Allen and DC 37 Political Director Wanda Williams are pressing Albany to put on the agenda for the next session the legislation needed for Groth to expand and create OTB jobs in New York City. Without any OTB in New York City, the racing industry loses about \$65 million a month to bookmakers, Internet gambling and slot machines.