

Harris, we're in trouble. If you multiply it by approximately 10 times our miles, that increases the cost to our squad by about \$60,000 a year. We would replace an ambulance every two years instead of every six. The time invested by volunteer members of the First Aid Squad would soon get old.

I run calls on Tuesday nights. If I have a call at 9:00 at night, and I'm in Kingston at 11:30, I'm home at midnight; and I get another call at 1:00 in the morning, I'm home at 4:00. It's tough to go to work the next day. I'm lucky; my job affords me an opportunity to go to work late. I've got a good union. But not everybody has a good union. Not everybody has the opportunity to do what I have to do, so they have to say, 'You know, I'd like to help the squad. I'd like to go out on call, but I can't afford it, because I have to put food on the table.'

I think it's interesting in the State of the County speech the Chairman said that we're at a crossroads here as a legislature, that this is the time to make a difference. Well, I agree. It is a time to make a difference. I think it's also interesting that he spoke of a tax break for volunteers. Well, I speak on behalf of approximately 50 volunteers in the First Aid Squad in Ellenville, and I would tell you this, 'Keep your tax break. Give me a hospital.'

You are at a crossroads. The community is here. I speak on behalf of the Squad. That hospital leaves, why don't you just give southern Ulster County to somebody else, because nobody's going to want it. You need a hospital for business. We've got a school that's improving and growing. Reverend Collins represents 18 churches and the people in those churches, those congregations. People talk of casinos. People talk of a lot of growth. Where's the health care? What are you going to tell somebody who has a heart attack on upper Ulster Heights Road: 'I hope you've got a good funeral director'? Mary says 'Please.' I beg of you. You must save this hospital. You must do everything in your power to save this hospital. By saving the hospital you save jobs. You save industry. You will help your tax base, and you will save lives.

The Pride of Ulster County Award – I commend that gentleman who won it this evening – and I would say this to you: I'll give you a pride of Ulster County, every one of you, when you say 'Yes,' that you're going to help that hospital. You will become saviors. You will become heroes to southern Ulster County, the town of Rochester, town of Wawarsing, village of Ellenville, and those people. And those countless thousands of people that will

survive because that hospital is there. Because that First Aid Squad is there. I beg of you to do everything you can on behalf of the people. Thank you."

**Jason Haenel, CSEA Local 1000, AFSCME, AFL-CIO:**

"My name is Jason Haenel. I am the political action coordinator for CSEA for the Hudson Valley. I cover roughly most of the Hudson Valley for about 40,000 CSEA members, including members



who work at Ellenville Hospital, so I'm also here to ask your assistance for this hospital. Much of what needs to be said has already been said by others, and much better than I can say it. Two major reasons that your support is really needed: First of all, as has been already mentioned, the

health care, the accessibility of health care this hospital provides, is all you have in that area. It has to remain there.

But also is an issue of jobs. Earlier this evening, there was a talk of all the efforts to bring additional jobs into the county, and the success that has had; and he finished by saying the next stage is to retain those jobs. If this hospital closes, you're also looking at more than 100 people losing their jobs. That will certainly impact the tax rolls of this county and restrict some other businesses that want to move to the area, if the quality of living in that area is reduced.

A little over a year ago, the employees of Ellenville Hospital asked the CSEA to come in and help them out, to represent them. And since then, we've been able to build a dialogue with the new administration there, letting them speak their mind on how to improve the hospital and improve the quality of care they have there. We've had to advocate on behalf of the hospital at the federal level and state level, so now we're here asking for your support.

Specifically, Resolution #80, which you will be voting on this evening, is a good first step. But only a first step. It calls for the Ways and Means Committee to start looking into ways to offer some additional business for the county to support Ellenville. But, as the Chairman said earlier, we can do more. I'd ask you to look at other ideas and other innovative and creative solutions; open up to the public for their ideas, whether it's through public hearings or

other methods, whether it's tobacco settlement monies... there's a host of different options out there. What I'd ask is for you to look at this, it's very important, it's at a crisis stage right now, and I ask you to treat it as such. Thank you very much."

**Jeffrey Kaplan, Mayor, Ellenville:**

(First part missing on tape) ... "for Ellenville and the surrounding communities, because we have no other option. Our commu-



nity, through the years, has donated millions of dollars to keep our hospital running. At Monday night's village of Ellenville board meeting, we passed a resolution urging the Town of Wawarsing and the Ellenville School District, along with the Village, to take all of our resources for community and health benefits and to make sure that we invest in Ellenville. We have split in the past with some of these health needs with other hospitals in the area and we have an urgent need to make sure those monies stay in our community. We ask you to make an effort to share and support and take as much of your medical services as possible and send them down to Ellenville. We need your help. We can't survive as a hospital, and our community will be shaken without that hospital. Thank you very much."

**Steve Kelley, CEO, Ellenville Regional Hospital:**

"My name is Steve Kelley. I'm the administrator of the Ellenville Hospital. I very much appreciate this opportunity to speak with all of you tonight. I appreciate Chairman Gerentine's efforts that have been going on prior to this, as well as the many other members of the legislature.