

Pataki opposes pro-union bill

■ Promises he'll veto proposal to give public workers raises when contract talks reach an impasse

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

ALBANY — Gov. George Pataki said yesterday he will veto a pro-union bill that local government and school district officials said would give automatic raises to public workers and drive up taxes.

The State Legislature, however, could try to override the veto with a two-thirds vote. In June the bill passed 61-0 in the Republican-led Senate and 133-1 in the Democrat-led Assembly.

The bill was the most criticized in a package of pro-union measures approved by the legislature this election year. It would authorize the Public Employment Relations Board to order an immediate 1 percent salary increase if the state or local government or school district was determined to be negotiating in "bad faith."

The measure also would lessen the fines and jail time public employees could face for striking despite the Taylor Law, which bans strikes by public service unions.

"We are delighted at the governor's action," said David Ernst of the New York State

School Boards Association. "That measure would increase local costs and, of necessity,



Gov. George Pataki vows to veto bill.

local taxes." The measure would protect public employees when their employers oppose negotiating a fair labor contract with a bargaining unit.

After the 1 percent automatic raise, the state Public Employment Relations Board could assess additional

raises of 0.5 of 1 percent every three months.

Public employee unions

"have little or no ability to bring their employers to the table to negotiate contracts," states a legislative memo supporting the bill. "Because employees have given up the traditional, private sector means of influencing employers . . . there is little or no impetus for an employer that is not interested in bargaining to reach a new agreement with an employee organization to come to the table and seriously bargain."

The Senate and Assembly majorities will review Pataki's concerns, spokesmen said.