

Pataki seeks to ship N-waste out of state instead of reopening dump in West Valley

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Gov. Pataki said Thursday night he wants to ship New York's low-level radioactive waste to another state instead of reopening the West Valley nuclear storage site.

"What I think we should be looking to do is achieve a multistate compact where our low-level nuclear waste could be stored in an out-of-state facility," Pataki told about 400 people during the annual awards dinner of the Springville Chamber of Commerce.

"Other states have done that. Right now we have the ability to enter into a multistate compact and we are going to look to do that."

New York has been engaged in a long and fruitless search for a place to

store low-level radioactive waste from reactors and medical procedures. The South Carolina dump that formerly took that waste closed its gates to New York last year.

Pataki, who would not say what states New York is looking to ship waste to, said if an agreement could not be reached, he would look at West Valley.

But the Republican governor said there is a "very good" chance an agreement could be reached if other states are building facilities that exceed their needs.

Earlier Thursday, Pataki deviated from his budget-cutting course to provide his first piece of state largess to the area — \$3.5 million for a new truck-access road to the American Axle and Manufacturing plant in Buffalo.

Pataki honored a promise made last fall by the administration of former Gov. Mario M. Cuomo during the gubernatorial campaign to build the road along an old railroad right of way to the plant on East Delavan Avenue.

The project will improve truck access to the auto-component manufacturing plant, which expects to increase employment by 400. But he made it clear this kind of spending is an exception.

"The previous administration went around the state making \$1.1 billion in promises — things that were promised last year that we will have to pay for this year," Pataki told American Axle workers.

"Well, we took a look. And after we met with the people from American

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Axle and talked with them about the quality of this work force, we've amended this budget, and we're including \$3.5 million to continue to expand and create jobs here."

The project does not involve new spending since the money comes from the already appropriated 1983 state Transportation Bond issue.

While it marks the first instance of state funding for the area under the new administration, the governor did not mention an earlier budgeted item of \$275,000 for training programs at American Axle. Plant officials said that funding has yet to be finalized, but they vowed to pursue it.

The governor's daylong visit to the region also included lunch with business leaders in a Buffalo restaurant and a major Erie County Republican fund-raiser that attracted 500 to the Radisson Hotel in Cheektowaga.

At each stop, Pataki was greeted by protesters opposing his proposed cuts in the State University of New York system and the state work force, but he did not shy away from answering their complaints.

In Springville, where his visit

marked the first by a governor since Hugh L. Carey in 1981, he bounded from his car to discuss the complaints of state workers facing layoffs, complimenting them on their interest and professionalism.

"I appreciate you being out here tonight, and I appreciate your right to yell at me," he told them.

During the dinner in the hometown of Pataki's friend and political ally, Assemblyman Thomas M. Reynolds, the governor reiterated his campaign themes — reforming welfare, cutting taxes and revamping a "failed criminal justice system."

He said he expects to encounter more demonstrations against his budget cuts, which he said must be made.

"I want to be able to say to those students that at the end of this year, maybe you'll have to pay slightly higher tuition, but we'll still have the finest state university system in the nation," he said.

"And when you get out, you will have the prospect of a job right here in Springville or Western New York. We don't want you to have to go to North Carolina for a job."

News wire services contributed to this report.