Our view: Revised bill on ambulance plan still a bad policy

By - STAFF REPORT

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A revised bill in the state Senate that creates special legislation that would allow only the cities of Utica and Glens Falls to retain their ambulance services should be rejected.

The bill, approved last week by the Assembly, ran into trouble in the Senate and was amended from its original state, which included all New York state municipalities trying to start an ambulance service. It’s now limited to Utica and Glens Falls.

It’s still a bad bill. There is a very good reason for the Certificate of Need process – and there is no good reason why two communities should be exempted, except that their legislators want it and no one else does.

What the revision does, essentially, is that it gives all the other senators an out. They can now vote for a bad bill because it won’t affect them. That means legislators from Buffalo to Watertown to Staten Island could end up deciding an issue that has absolutely no effect on their constituents. That’s not only lopsided, it goes against the grain of good government. The revised bill affects only Glens Falls and Utica, and their legislators – for whatever reason – are just fine with this bad legislation.

Assemblyman Anthony Brindisi, D-Utica, who sponsored the Assembly bill, and some Utica officials have cited city budget figures, claiming that the ambulance service is profitable. But those figures have been disputed by others, who believe they are the result of “creative budgeting.”

If Utica needs, merits and can justify an additional ambulance service for their community – one fully subsidized by the taxpayers – then the Certificate of Need process that legislation is attempting to circumvent would bear that out. That goes for Glens Falls, too.

But if the two municipalities simply “want” an ambulance service, then that’s wrong. The Senate should reject this bad bill.

And if they don’t, the governor should refuse to sign it.

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