
County Executives Unite To Fight Spending Plan

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MAYVILLE — While policymakers in Albany are patting themselves on the back for cuts in the state budget, county executives are outraged that the expenses being slashed are being passed on to counties.

On Friday, while state lawmakers came closer to a budget agreement, county executives from across the state joined together to protest the state passing its spending cuts on to counties, increasing expenses at the local level.

The executives are concerned with three particular issues, two state cost shifts and an across-the-board 2 percent cut to local assistance spending that are part of the 2008-09 state budget negotiations.

The two cost shifts would cost counties and the city of New York at least \$27.5 million in the current budget year and \$50 million next year from an increased share of welfare expenses and the full cost of local youth detention facilities. The cuts will mean an additional hit of at least \$800,000 to the county's budget.

"The budget for the state of New York that was proposed by Gov. Paterson, and now apparently agreed to by the Senate and Assembly, has assured the taxpayers of Chautauqua County that their property taxes are going to go up next year," County Executive Greg Edwards said. "Everyone, from the governor through the senators and assemblymen all agree that the economy is in trouble, that aggressive steps need to be taken, and I agree. However the aggressive steps that are proposed in Albany is to order Chautauqua County taxpayers to pay their bills for them so they can wash their hands and claim they had no part in the killing of our economy and our jobs, thereby driving our children and our families out of New York state."

Edwards said the state started with the governor's budget, telling county officials it had to pay more for welfare programs and its obligation to care for children in detention centers.

"Now they are ordering us to continue to do their work and are reducing even further the money they send us to run their programs," Edwards said. "This is not a cut in spending by Albany, this is just ordering us to pay more and send you — the property taxpayers — the bill, so they can claim no new taxes."

Edwards said state policymakers should follow the example of Chautauqua County where last year spending was cut by more than \$3 million and a property and sales tax cut were delivered.

"But we cannot reduce spending and then have the state tell us to absorb more of their costs for their obligations," he said. "Now is the time for the governor, the Senate and the Assembly to represent the people who put them in office and cut programs, stop the hiring frenzy in Albany and own up to the decisions they are making that raise your taxes."

Edwards called on county residents to call Gov. David Paterson, (518) 474-8390 or e-mail at www.ny.gov, and their state Sen. Catharine Young, R-Olean, and assemblymen Joe Giglio, R-Gowanda, and William Parment, D-North Harmony, to complain about the increase in local cost being passed on by the state.

"Today taxpayers have greater access and more impact. If the people who pay the bills for the state with their hard earned dollars will call and e-mail the governor and their state representatives, tax payers like you and me can impact what the future of our state will be," Edwards said.

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