



*News From*

# **Maggie Brooks**

## *Monroe County Executive*

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### **BROOKS' 2009 BUDGET: NO PROPERTY TAX INCREASE**

*Fifth Consecutive Balanced County Budget Preserves 2008 Property Tax Cut;  
Holds Spending Below Rate of Inflation with No Service Reductions*

**County Executive Maggie Brooks** presented her fifth Monroe County Budget this evening at a meeting of the County Legislature. Despite unprecedented challenges resulting from the national and state economic downturn, the County Executive's 2009 Operating Budget, totaling \$905,475,676, is balanced, keeps property taxes stable, and responsibly funds quality of life services.

*"The state of our economy is certainly alarming, but our community can rest assured that this Administration has faced the economic crisis not with panic but with resolve,"* said County Executive **Brooks**. *"We have redoubled our dedication to fiscal responsibility, smaller government, and putting the interests of taxpayers first."*

#### **Preserves 2008 Property Tax Cut**

For the fifth straight year, the County Executive honored her commitment to taxpayers by proposing stable property taxes. The 2009 Budget preserves the reduced property tax rate that was set last year, holding the rate flat at \$8.99 per \$1,000 of assessed value.

*"Property taxes in our State are out of control, at an astounding 79% above the national average. This has led to the perfect storm of unaffordability that makes it extremely difficult to create jobs and raise a family in New York,"* stated **Brooks**. *"By preserving our property tax cut, we will provide real relief to the hard-working and overburdened property taxpayers of our community. And we will make it easier for both families and businesses to thrive and continue to enjoy our first-rate quality of life."*

#### **Spending Held Below Rate of Inflation**

The 2009 Budget holds taxpayer supported non-mandated spending, or the spending that the County can control on a local level, to \$101,367,152, representing an increase of only 2.9 percent over last year. This increase in spending is well below the rate of inflation, which has been measured at 4.9 percent.

This fiscally sound spending plan also keeps Monroe County in full compliance with the Taxpayer Protection Act of 2007, which requires all increases in non-mandated spending to be held below the rate of inflation.

*“Given the staggering increases in the cost of energy and other commodities over the last year, keeping spending under the rate of inflation is a true accomplishment,”* continued **Brooks**.

### **Budget Projects No Deficit for 2009**

County Executive Brooks was able to balance the 2009 Budget through a combination of cost-cutting strategies, new efficiencies, and revenue enhancements.

In 2009 the County is anticipating approximately \$22 million from the sale of property tax liens and \$10 million from the securitization of PILOT, or payment in lieu of taxes, agreements. These one-time revenue enhancements have helped to close the structural budget gap without any additional burden on property taxpayers.

*“Continuing our efforts to do more with less, in 2009 we will operate an even more lean, efficient, and forward thinking local government. This approach has allowed us to craft a fiscally responsible budget that protects taxpayers and maintains the quality of life services that our residents expect and deserve,”* stated **Brooks**.

### **Calls for State Mandate Reform**

The single largest portion of the 2009 County Operating Budget, mandated spending, totals \$640,264,699, an increase of 5.2 percent over last year. A staggering 80 percent of the total County Budget is mandated by the state and federal governments, giving Monroe County local control over only 20 percent of its spending.

In an effort to address the issue of unfunded mandates, County Executive Brooks and her colleagues in Erie and Onondaga Counties have established the Upstate Mandate Relief Commission, which is engaged in a comprehensive study of unfunded mandates and will develop specific plans to deliver relief to local property taxpayers.

*“The burden of these unfunded mandates on our community is immense, and reveals how the State’s practice of shifting the cost of providing services to local governments is unsustainable,”* **Brooks** continued. *“Instead of going to the State with problems, County Executives have positioned themselves as partners and will continue to go to Albany with solutions. And given the opportunity that cost-cutting and mandate relief will give us to reduce the burden of property taxes, I am confident that we will not be ignored.”*

## **Ready to Partner with State to Address Budget Crisis**

Brooks concluded by offering the partnership and counsel of Monroe County to Governor David Paterson and the State Legislature as it looks to address an historic \$12.5 billion deficit in the 2009-10 State Budget. Together with the New York State Association of Counties, Brooks recently announced over \$1 billion in proposed State budget cuts that would not shift costs to local governments or force counties to raise property taxes.

*“This is a defining moment in our County and State’s history; a moment that will ultimately determine if our economy will move forward on a path of progress and growth, or continue on its downward spiral,”* concluded **Brooks**. *“We must preserve our spirit of collaboration and work in partnership with Albany to enact true reform, real cuts in spending, and genuine mandate relief. It is only by ensuring the long-term fiscal stability of Monroe County and New York State that we will solidify our efforts to build an even stronger community.”*

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*Media Inquiries, contact:  
Department of Communications at 753-1080*