



MONROE ☆ ERIE ☆ ONONDAGA

Maggie Brooks
Monroe County Executive

Chris Collins
Erie County Executive

Joanie Mahoney
Onondaga County Executive

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UPSTATE COUNTY EXECUTIVES ANNOUNCE MANDATE RELIEF COMMISSION

Brooks, Collins and Mahoney embark on historic statewide tour to unveil Commission

Monroe County Executive Maggie Brooks, Erie County Executive Chris Collins and **Onondaga County Executive Joanie Mahoney** today embarked on a statewide tour to announce the creation of the Upstate Mandate Relief Commission. The 10-member commission, comprised of business and community leaders from each of the three member counties, will engage in a comprehensive study of state mandated programs and devise a plan to reform these mandates in the interests of protecting local property taxpayers.

“Even though county governments across New York continue to streamline services and do more with less, a fiscal crisis brought on by the state persists because of the heavy burden of state mandated expenses on local taxpayers,” said **Monroe County Executive Maggie Brooks**. *“We have come together today as both County Executives and New Yorkers because we recognize that if left unchecked, unfunded state mandates will bankrupt counties and force more families and jobs out of our state. This Commission is charged with taking an in-depth look at these unfunded mandates and formulating serious proposals for reform that we will urge state government to adopt.”*

“As leaders in Upstate New York, we must do everything we can to convince our state lawmakers to stop burdening property taxpayers with unfair and unfunded mandates out of Albany,” said **Erie County Executive Chris Collins**. *“This kind of burden is dragging down the Upstate economy, driving people out of the state and impacting our quality of life. Upstate will never grow unless state lawmakers reduce the mandates that are strangling our local governments. Upstate taxpayers desperately need relief. That relief will be hard to find if Albany continues to balance its budget on the back of county taxpayers.”*

“When New York State balances its budget by shifting the burden, the result is not on state programs – it falls to the counties,” said **Onondaga County Executive Joanie Mahoney**. *“It has now become our responsibility to cut programs or raise taxes and explain that to our constituents. Regardless of which county we reside in, we all live in New York State. This commission will seek a better answer to mandated funding and unsustainable programming.”*

The goals of the Upstate Mandate Relief Commission are:

- To compile and document all state mandated spending programs that impact counties;
- Analyze the level of state funding support that is provided for these programs, and assess the amount of unfunded mandates;
- Educate citizens and state representatives on the burden imposed by state mandated programs;
- Recommend pilot programs and waiver opportunities for the state to adopt as reform measures; and
- Demonstrate potential operational efficiencies and cost savings for both New York State and its counties when restrictive mandates are eased.

In Monroe County, mandated expenses represent 71% of the budget, meaning that the county only has local control over 29% of its spending. Mandated spending accounts for \$671.3 million in the 2008 County Budget, and Medicaid accounted for an additional \$162 million – making it the single largest mandate imposed by state government. Overall mandated spending in Monroe County cost taxpayers \$833.3 million this year.

“Counties were originally created to be the social service providers for New York State, but over time the state has been paying less and less in reimbursements while asking counties to provide more and more services,” said **Monroe County Executive Maggie Brooks**. *“This forces counties like Monroe to focus budget conversations on which taxes to raise or which services to cut – and that is unacceptable and unsustainable. We must combat these costs in order to secure our financial freedom for future generations.”*

Mandated expenses account for 53.6% of the budget in Erie County, and the county spent nearly \$779 million this year on unfunded state mandates. Medicaid costs alone in Erie County come to more than \$191 million.

“In Erie County, our business approach to government is driving efficiencies and cost-saving initiatives every day,” said **Erie County Executive Chris Collins**. *“The Governor and Legislature need to seriously think about the number and scope of state programs and our ability to pay for them. New York State will never move forward if we continue to burden property taxpayers with unfunded mandates that support overly generous and unsustainable state programs. Forcing counties to increase property taxes is no longer an acceptable method of payment.”*

In Onondaga County, state mandated expenses accounted for 52% of the county’s budget. That amounted to \$395 million of the county’s spending. Medicaid accounted for \$92.4 million – claiming over half of the property tax revenues collected by the county and making it Onondaga County’s single highest expense.

*“Onondaga County’s budget is already lean, coming in with an increase of spending that is only a quarter of the current rate of inflation,” said **Onondaga County Executive Joanie Mahoney**. “Even a 1% shift of burden from the state onto Onondaga County has a huge impact, adding \$1.5 million to our budget; but the mandates remain. That leaves very little room for county government to do anything more than raise property taxes. I am not going to pass that burden on to the community. If the Governor cuts funding, I will have to cut programs.”*

The Upstate Mandate Relief Commission will seek input from experts around the state, which will allow the group to draft a comprehensive report. The report, to be completed by the end of the year, will be provided to Governor David Paterson and the New York State Legislature as they prepare for the next session of the Legislature and introduction of the 2009-2010 Executive Budget.

*“With the state facing its most severe fiscal challenge in a decade, it is time to recognize that the current State-County public service delivery system is fractured, insufficient and broken,” said **Stephen J. Acquario, Executive Director of the New York State Association of Counties (NYSAC)**. “The more focus that is given to the mandated role that county governments play in New York State, the better off the property taxpayers are going to be.”*

Monroe, Erie and Onondaga County have each appointed three members to the all-volunteer Upstate Mandate Relief Commission, as well as Rochester-area businessman Geoff Rosenberger, who will serve as chair. Rosenberger is the co-founder and Managing Director of Clover Capital Management, a Rochester investment firm. He also serves on several boards; including the Center for Governmental Research, Greater Rochester Health Foundation, and Junior Achievement of Rochester. He holds an economics degree and MBA from the University of Kentucky and is a Chartered Financial Analyst (CFA).

*“I appreciate the vote of confidence the County Executives have placed in me and the other nine members of the Upstate Mandate Relief Commission,” said **Commission Chair Geoff Rosenberger**. “Unfunded mandates aren’t just a headache for local elected officials, they impact all New Yorkers by needlessly driving up the cost of providing government services. The commission will apply our collective business, economic and government policy backgrounds to find ways to relieve New York taxpayers from these harmful state mandates.”*

The members of the Upstate Mandate Relief Commission are:

Monroe County Members

William C. Carpenter is the Chief Operating Officer of the Salient Corporation, based in Horseheads, NY. Carpenter previously served as Director of Management and Budget and Medicaid Czar for Monroe County.

Scott Nasca is the President of Generation Capital Management LLC in Rochester. He is a 15-year veteran of the investment industry and holds the designation of Chartered Financial Analyst (CFA).

Rebecca L. Sumner has served as the Director of Development, Research Associate and Assistant Secretary to the Board of Trustees at the Center for Governmental Research.

Erie County Members

Dr. Kevin R. Hardwick is an Associate Professor of Political Science at Canisius College in Buffalo, where he has focused his research on state legislative politics and municipal service distribution. Hardwick previously served three terms as First Ward Councilmember in the City of Tonawanda.

Michael Weiner is the Commissioner of the Erie County Department of Social Services. He's responsible for the department's administration with a budget of a half billion dollars and a workforce of over 1,600 employees.

Sundra Ryce is the President and C.E.O. of SLR Contracting and Service Company in Buffalo. The company has offices in Syracuse and Springville. Ryce also serves on the board of the Buffalo Urban Development Corporation.

Onondaga County Members

William Fisher is the President of Summit Software Company in Jamesville, Onondaga County. Fisher also was the Director of County Executive Mahoney's Transition Team in 2007.

Joel Delmonico is the Vice President and General Manager of Clear Channel Radio in Syracuse. Delmonico oversees day-to-day operations of seven radio stations. He has been recognized for his contributions to schools in the Syracuse area.

Cydney Johnson is the co-founder of the Spark Group Ltd. She also served on Mahoney's Transition Team, overseeing workforce relations.

The Upstate Mandate Relief Commission plans to hold its first meeting on October 1st, 2008.

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