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GOP LEGISLATORS BLAST DEMOCRATIC MAJORITY FOR ADDING \$43 MILLION IN SPENDING TO COUNTY BUDGET WHILE PUTTING COUNTY'S AAA BOND RATING IN JEOPARDY

White Plains New York – December 7, 2010 - The Republican members on the Westchester County Board of Legislators today branded yesterday's budget maneuvers by the Democratic legislators as fiscally irresponsible and called the addition of \$43 Million in additional spending, "a total disregard for the taxpayers of Westchester and a full retreat in the effort to downsize County government."

All Democratic members of the Board's Budget and Appropriations Committee (B&A Committee) who were present (Martin Rogowsky D- Harrison/Port Chester was absent) voted for a package of additions to the proposed budget including the \$43 million in new spending – much of which had been eliminated in County Executive Rob Astorino's proposed budget. The Republican members of B&A, Minority Leader Jim Maisano (New Rochelle) Legislator Bernice Spreckman (Yonkers) and Legislator Sheila Marcotte (Eastchester) all voted against the additional spending. The spending additions were accompanied by other faulty revenue additions in a reckless attempt to balance the new spending.

The Republican legislators were also troubled that the spending additions were crafted inside the private Democratic caucus – which is closed to the public, press and Republican legislators – and only shown to the Republican legislators just before the vote was taken.

In a speech before the B&A Committee's vote, Minority Leader Maisano raised strong objections to the Democrats taking of \$10 million from the County's 2010 Fund Balance – money that government accounting rules require to be reserved for the 2012 budget – to help fund their \$43 million spending spree. Maisano stated, "This unprecedented act alone will place our AAA bond rating in jeopardy.

No Board of Legislators in recent history has raided the reserve fund dedicated to the next year's budget. Earlier in the day, our auditors specifically warned against this budget tactic, but remarkably, the Democrats still all supported this fiscally irresponsible raid of the fund balance."

The County Executive's proposed budget reduced spending in the 2011 budget by some \$33 million from 2010 – the first time spending has been cut in decades from the prior year. The Republican legislators are supportive of his efforts to cut spending.

"We absolutely must keep our pledge to reduce the size and cost of County government in the face of an overbearing tax burden on residents and businesses," said Minority Whip Gordon A. Burrows (R-Yonkers/Bronxville). "We will continue to fight for fiscal responsibility."

The Democrat budget 'additions' package included:

- Raising expected sales tax revenue by \$2.3 million – way beyond any responsible economic forecasts.
- Restoring the multi-million dollar Section 8 program to the County Budget that was in the process of being transferred to New York State, and
- Pushing for an unnecessary six month 'so-called transition' for mental health facilities, already slated to be closed, with services to be taken over by established not-for-profit human service agencies.

Legislator Sheila Marcotte (R-Eastchester/New Rochelle) was outraged by the Section 8 maneuver; "This makes no sense. For several months the administration has been working with New York State on a transfer of the Section 8 program, and the State issued a Request for Proposals (RFP) for local not-for-profits to take over the program with responses due by January 11, 2011. If you are serious about downsizing government, this was a very thoughtful reform. The Democrats attempt to block the reform is bad policy, and may not even be possible at this point."

Regarding the closing of mental health facilities in Peekskill and Mount Kisco, both of which are underutilized, non-profit agencies have already pledged to take over services for those clients. Legislator Bernice Spreckman (R-Yonkers) said, "The transition is already well underway. Keeping these facilities open and adding funding for staff and facilities for six more months is unnecessary and total waste of taxpayer dollars."

Legislator John G. Testa (R-Peekskill) concluded, "It is inexcusable that Democratic legislators are acting against the will of the citizens of Westchester County. Westchester taxpayers and businesses deserve immediate relief and adding \$43 million in additional spending after the County Executive has struggled to make \$33 million in budget cuts and making the decision in a secretive Democratic caucus is clearly bad fiscal policy and bad government."

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