

**John G. Testa**

Legislator, 1st District
Minority Leader

Committee Assignments:

Budget & Appropriations
Community Services
Economic Development
Energy & Environment
Legislation

Republican Legislators Applaud Procurement Process That Funds More Programs for More At-Risk Youth

Democratic Legislators Interpretation of Law and Facts Called Questionable At Best

White Plains, NY--Republican caucus members of the Westchester County Board of Legislators (BOL) applauded the County's Invest In Kids awards, which will guarantee three years of funding for more programs serving more at-risk youth at the same investment as the previous cycle even while the state's investment in county programs like this has been cut over the last several years. Programs will be monitored by the county's Youth Board and provided free of charge by non-profits in Greenburgh, Mount Vernon, New Rochelle, Peekskill, Port Chester and Yonkers.

"We are successful any time the county can provide more services in Peekskill and throughout the county to more people at the same price," said Minority Leader John Testa (R-Peekskill). "While some of my colleagues in the majority caucus are attempting to portray these awards negatively, I think that is more a response to their favored programs not receiving funding due to a competitive and open bidding process. But the results speak for themselves. Any time we use open and competitive bidding, we are able to serve more residents at better costs."

Legislator Sheila Marcotte (R-Eastchester), who has sponsored legislation to make the County's procurement policy more competitive and transparent, was critical of her colleague's interpretation of a controversial [2011 act](#) regarding Invest In Kids funding.

"The Democratic caucus is arguing that once a program is awarded county taxpayer dollars, it should receive funding in perpetuity. That doesn't make sense, and quite simply is not in the taxpayer's best interest and not what the law requires," Marcotte said. "We should want more competition for contracts--not less. I do not understand why some of my colleagues are insisting upon the opposite, but I will happily tell my constituents in New Rochelle that more at-risk youth are eligible for more programs thanks to our county's procurement policy."

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The Democratic caucus argued during a recent Community Services meeting that Section 1 of the 2011 act guarantees future funding for any Invest In Kids program that already receives funding. The section reads, "Line items shall be created in the Youth Bureau in the adopted County Budget for each agency currently in contract with the County to provide Invest in Kids Fund programs." Because no programs were under contract with the county for 2015, no line items were necessary in the 2015 county operating budget. Further, the Act does not amend procurement laws and policy, which apply to the award of Invest in Kids contracts with non-profits.

"When you have competitive bidding, it cuts out the possibility of favoritism, nepotism, and backroom deals," said Legislator Michael Smith (R-Mount Pleasant). "Now, seeing everything that's going on in Albany with indictments of several elected officials, we should be applauding the results of an open and competitive bid process. Some of my colleagues want to undermine that process and their constituents have to ask why that is. When some of my colleagues decry a delay in awarding funding to at-risk youth and then they themselves delay funding, their constituents have to ask why that is."

Under the county's procurement policy, the Invest In Kids contracts must be approved by the Board of Acquisitions and Contracts (A&C). On Thursday, the Majority Caucus used their position on A&C to delay funding to these fifty programs for at least a week.

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