
2011 ALBANY COUNTY EXECUTIVE BUDGET

REQUIRED LEGISLATIVE ACTIONS

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VOLUME I

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The following Legislative actions are required to implement the 2011 Executive Budget.

Repeal Resolution 441 of 2009 and 298 of 2010

Justification and Financial/Operational Implications:

This budget proposes a significant reduction in workforce, achieved in conjunction with the Early Retirement Incentive (ERI). The ERI has been offered to 234 individuals. Spending on personnel has been reduced by 12 percent. The remaining positions are the bare minimum necessary to operate the programs that are continued. Because staffing levels have been so drastically reduced, every position is critical. Savings that would normally accrue from vacancies have already been factored into the budget for next year by elimination of any extraneous positions.

Therefore, departments do not have the staffing capacity to let positions remain vacant for any length of time. It is essential that departments have the capability to hire staff for vacant positions in a timely manner. If departments do not have the flexibility to move through the hiring process as quickly as possible, operations will be crippled. Employees remaining on the job will suffer from the stress of overwork, which will have a devastating effect on employee morale.

In the proposed Budget, several departments are undergoing reorganizations which will achieve savings. These reorganizations allow for higher paid, senior staff to take advantage of the ERI and leave County service, but are dependent on filling newly created positions, primarily lower level and lower salaried than the senior positions eliminated from the budget. In all cases, the departments have demonstrated the savings required by the State for participation in the ERI program.

The Legislature enacted a hiring freeze in 2009 through Resolution 441. The process established in Resolution 09-441 required that any "proposed hiring for a critical position, after review and recommendation by the Committee to fill Vacancies, any recommended hiring shall be submitted to the Audit and Finance Committee and the Personnel Committee for approval." This was supplemented by Resolution 298 of 2010.

Legislative committees and the legislature convene only once per month. The legislative schedule for submission of any requests for action for consideration by the legislature at these monthly meetings is rigid and limited, and again, only allows the opportunity at one point in the month to seek legislative authorization. The process established by the legislature extends the hiring process from 2 to 6 months, given the requirements for consideration by multiple committees and appearance on a committee agenda in a timely manner.

Some requests never appear on a committee agenda and there is no means for the public to know that the legislature has declined to even bring a request to fill a position to committee for debate if does not appear on a committee agenda.

At the time the resolution was passed, and again when amended by Resolution 228 of 2010, the Legislature was concerned about achieving budgetary savings. Those savings have been achieved. The personnel savings included in the proposed 2011 budget eliminate many vacant positions, and go further to reduce personnel spending through the ERI. The positions that remain are already incorporated into the budget, and reimbursement generated by those positions taken into account. With the adoption of this budget, the Legislature is authorizing the spending for these positions. Requiring redundant authorization on an individual basis will only create bureaucratic delays and unnecessary use of staff time and County resources.

For all of the reasons stated above, the Legislature should repeal Resolution 441 of 2009 and Resolution 298 of 2010.

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Employer Contribution Stabilization Program

Justification: The New York State and Local Retirement System Contribution Stabilization Program is an optional program that establishes a graded contribution rate system. If governments elect to participate, it enables them to pay a portion of annual contributions over time, leading to smoother, more predictable pension costs.

Financial/Operational Implications: This budget is based on Albany County's participation in the Contribution Stabilization Program and amortizing \$6,831,132 in 2011.

Health Insurance Contribution Rates

Justification: Health insurance and dental benefits are an ever-rising cost to the County. Currently, the majority of full-time employees contribute ten percent of their health insurance premium and all full-time employees receive dental benefits for free. In an effort to continue to provide lost-cost insurance to employees it is proposed that all individuals (employees and retirees) receiving full-time benefits who are currently enrolled in an Albany County or Teamsters health insurance plan contribute ten percent of the premium cost of their plan.

Financial/Operational Implications: The total savings realized from this action are \$2,005,773. Of this, \$768,729 will come from contributions from 549 employees who currently do not contribute to their health insurance. The additional \$1,237,044 will be realized from contributions from Albany County retirees.

Civil Service Employee Exam Waiver – Two per year

Justification: Most promotional series have two or three exams each. Given the revised and updated exam schedule an employee is likely to have the opportunity to apply for any promotional exam in their current and/or other relevant series at no cost to them. It is requested that if an employee desires to take more than two exams per year that he be charged the cost of the exam booklet, \$7.50 (non-sworn) or \$12.50 (sworn), and not the non-employee filing fee.

Financial/Operational Implications: In 2009, 10 of 215 employees that received exam waivers sat for more than two exams.

Consumer Affairs Fines and Rates

Justification: Local Law No. 1 of 1992 required item pricing by all retail stores in Albany County. Section 6 of this law deals with enforcement, including the fines for violations. These fines have not been increased since the adoption of the law in 1992. This amendment to the local law would increase the allowable fines levied against those not in compliance with the law therefore increasing the amount of revenue generated by the county and restoring the incentive to comply with the law.

Financial/Operational Implications: There are no operational implications. Additional revenues would be collected in the normal course of business. Anticipated revenue impact is \$95,000.

Implementation of Sheriff Road Patrol Chargeback – Requiring Chargebacks of Costs That Exceed Costs Incurred in 2009

Justification: To collect payment for the cost of providing road patrol to a municipality that does not provide its own law enforcement or one which is currently assisted by County law enforcement. These entities have been identified because the services provided to these municipalities specifically benefit the citizens of that municipality, not the entire county. Yet, property owners and other taxpayers in all municipalities must contribute to the costs even when they also pay for the costs of a municipal police department. The Executive Budget assumes that the increase in costs above 2009 for the Road Patrol Unit will be charged back to the municipalities receiving this service, allocated by population.

Financial/Operational Implications: In 2009 the total cost for the Sheriff's Road Patrol Unit was \$2,220,704. It is estimated that with overtime and increasing fringe rates the 2010 costs will be \$100,919 higher than the prior year.

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Request to Hire Deputy Sheriff Positions

Justification: Currently, the Office is operating with 13 vacancies in Deputy Sheriff lines and it is expected that by July there will be an additional two vacancies. Zone Five Academy accepts classes for training only two times a year, January and July. Therefore in order to maximize the revenue received through reimbursement it is necessary to fill three Deputy Sheriff positions in both January and July. This action is not necessary if Resolution 441 of 2009 and Resolution 298 of 2010 are repealed as requested above. However, in this particular circumstance time is crucial given the structure of the Zone Five Academy classes.

Financial/Operational Implications: The Deputy Sheriff positions will start at the base salary of \$40,539. Therefore, the first three positions will cost the County \$121,617 in salary plus approximately \$54,000 in fringe. The three fills in July will cost \$60,810 plus an additional \$27,000 in fringe. The base salary savings are included in the Personal Service Savings (PSS) line. Also, four of the six positions will be 100 percent reimbursed by the Albany County Airport Authority and Office of Court Administration.