

2019 BUDGET MESSAGE FROM DANIEL P McCOY

I am pleased to once again present a budget that showcases the fiscal progress and programmatic growth that my administration has made since I took office in January, 2012. This is the sixth straight budget that I have proposed that is under the State mandated tax cap despite an ever increasing number of unfunded mandates combined with continued cuts in state and federal aid.

This budget is balanced and provides the services many County residents rely upon; services for seniors, children, veterans or those in our county most in need. This is accomplished without any cuts to our programming or our workforce; without budgeting gimmicks or one-shots, and without the use of general fund reserves. This has led to a projected undesignated, unappropriated fund balance of over \$60 million, double that of when I took office. This has allowed us to avoid the cost of short term borrowing and for the first time in a long time to earn interest through strategic investing.

Not only are we continuing to provide existing services, we continually look to enhance and improve our programs through strategic expansion, increased efficiencies and other improvements. These critical services come at a cost, and the only revenue directly under our control is our county tax levy. I remain committed to not placing additional stress on our county and real property owners. Due to an overall increase in the full valuation of real property within the County we were able to increase the County tax levy by \$1.6 million without increasing the equalized tax rate paid by property owners.

For the third consecutive year the State Comptroller has placed Albany County into a category of no designation of fiscal stress based on our prudent management practices and impressive record of fiscal improvement and growth. Our score has improved each year the State Comptroller has analyzed this data.

This budget increases compensation for virtually all workers. All but two collective bargaining units have settled five year contracts by this point guaranteeing their members raises this year. I hope to see the remaining bargaining units settle as soon as possible. For our non-union workers this budget contains a 2% raise over their 2018 salary.

The biggest change in this budget from prior budgets is the addition of two funded mandates from the State. First, Raise the Age increases the age of juvenile accountability in our justice system over the next two years. This budget contains a total of 21 additional positions and a total increase of \$8 million to the budget for this initiative, all of which will be fully reimbursed by the State. Second, Statewide Implementation of the 2017 Indigent Legal Services Reform, initiated by legislation originating within my administration, will increase the quality of our indigent legal defense by increasing access to quality defense attorneys at all levels of the system, reducing caseloads and making other quality improvements. This has a total impact on our 2019 budget of \$1.75 million and will also be fully reimbursed by NY State.

Also, the budget continues our support of the Albany County Land Bank, with a grant of \$250,000, bringing the total support from the County to the Land Bank to \$2.25 million in direct support along with \$331,000 in forgiven revenue due back to the County and \$17.6 million in assessed value of tax foreclosed real property since the Land Bank was formed. In that time the land bank has enabled more than 300 properties to return to the tax rolls and has been repeatedly cited as one of the most successful in the state. I look forward to the next few weeks when we will review this budget proposal with the members of the County Legislature who have been important partners in the success we have had in stabilizing County finances and in putting into place sound budgetary practices.

I would like to thank legislative leadership for working with my administration in our effort to keep Albany County moving forward with our mutual goal of improving the quality of life for our residents while maintaining fiscal prudence. We are only able to move forward if we are all working together towards the same goal.