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Challenges, Opportunities Await Oneida County in 2009

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This New Year, while unique in the challenges that we face in the aftermath of an economic downturn, is not unlike years past when we set goals and hope that it is better than the year we leave.

As I look to 2009, I know that our goals and hopes must have strong resolve behind them as we face a very difficult road ahead. More people will require services this year and there will be less available to help a larger population in need.

It is our responsibility to lead and solidify the partnerships we have established to provide necessary services for our people. However, the way we deliver these services must be looked at like never before. Programs must be realigned and duplication will not be the answer.

In county government, we will review all of our service deliveries in and out of county government and provide those services in a consolidated, cost-effective manner. As we speak of consolidation in government services, our not-for-profit community must join us in eliminating duplicative and ineffective programs.

Shifting dollars is not the answer. Realigning our programs in partnership with the community including the United Way and Community Foundation is not only necessary now, but is the key to our future.

We will continue our work with towns and villages to move our law enforcement consolidation to action. There has been talk before, but this time there must be action. We must inject more energy into our education system through workforce development and economic development to provide the skills and education for the months and years to come.

We will continue our fight against NYRI and not relent on our efforts to see that our Marcy site is home to the new jobs that will lead us to recovery. This site has enormous potential for which a major step must be New York state's commitment to place the IBM packaging center here. This project is the one positive economic development initiative in Gov. David Paterson's budget and needs all of our legislative support to be located here.

We need to resolve our differences once and for all with the Oneida Indian Nation. There is no better time to come together for the region's betterment and survival. I call on the governor, the Oneidas and all stakeholders to come together – check our self interests at the door – and

resolve this in true compromise. This is not a Western Oneida County issue but one that impacts all county residents.

It has been said by some that in response to the current economic situation we need to cut back as much as possible, including any plans that could help grow this county when the economy starts to upturn.

It has always been my goal to make this county a better place during my term as county executive. In order to accomplish that, county government can not be cut down to the bare minimum. We need to be able to respond when economic opportunities present themselves and we need plans and ideas to get us through these tough economic times.

We have the chance to develop plans and implement real changes that can help us through the difficult days and weeks ahead, that can help our families and neighbors deal with the pain of economic difficulties and that can revive our region and position us at the head of the pack when new opportunities emerge.

These are great challenges and in this time of change — as Washington and the Obama administration develop a recovery plan — we must be unified in our requests.

When the economy recovers, the areas that will lead the pace will be those that use this time to prepare. I will lead. I will convene the partners who want to realign our landscape.

Oneida County has the opportunity to be a leader not a follower, if we act aggressively and rely on the fiscal soundness we have achieved to invest in the future.

My thanks to all of the men and women in public service who serve our county in all levels of government. Their commitment to the people of this community is unwavering in the most difficult times. Also, thank you to our citizens who understand sacrifice and whose support is greatly appreciated.

My wishes to all for a healthy and happy New Year.