



COUNTY OF ONEIDA
OFFICE OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE
ONEIDA COUNTY OFFICE BUILDING
800 PARK AVENUE
UTICA, NEW YORK 13501
(315) 798-5800
FAX (315) 798-2390
www.ocgov.net

ANTHONY J. PICENTE, JR.
County Executive
ce@ocgov.net

NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

Monday, January 12, 2009

Picente: State Budget Carries Major Negative Impacts For County Taxpayers, Programs

Oneida County Executive Anthony J. Picente, Jr., today voiced deep concerns over the proposed New York State Budget's impact on Oneida County taxpayers and on vital programs that serve county residents.

Picente said the Departments of Health, Mental Health and Social Services all face the most extensive funding reductions without any reductions in the mandates that require County Government to operate many programs and services.

"The current proposal is the worst of both worlds," Picente said. "What this budget does is shift costs to counties by preserving mandates while eliminating the funding we need to meet those mandates. The budget also eliminates support for important, essential non-mandated programs that county residents want and need. Without action in Albany to repair the shortcomings of this proposed budget, we could face a property tax increase at the county level, the loss of vital services, or both. I urge Gov. Paterson and the Legislature to take action that will eliminate this proposal's negative impacts on county taxpayers and vulnerable families and seniors who need services."

Picente said he hopes that the Governor's State of the State speech will become a call to move the state budget in the right direction. "The Governor gave us a message of inspiration, and laid out the need for change, but we all need to have this followed up by action that gets to the heart of the problems facing our region and our economy," Picente said. "I look forward to working with the Governor to accomplish the goals he laid out in his speech, specifically reducing the burden of property taxes. That's a goal we can accomplish through mandate relief and through a united effort to contain costs, not through more cost-shifting."

Picente said that county departments have developed a partial list of impacts from the initial budget proposal the governor unveiled last month.

Health Department: The Governor's budget proposes the following cuts and proposals:

- 1.) Eliminate Emergency Preparedness Grant ---\$235,469 loss of revenue - Pays for 3 positions

- 2.) Eliminate Human Services COLA for 2009 ---\$90,000 loss of revenue.
- 3.) Eliminate reimbursement of Admin cost for Pre-school Special Education --- \$144,582 loss of revenue
- 4.) Eliminate or reduce Healthy Families Grant currently budgeted at ---\$830,829 – Pays for 1 position and contracts with outside agencies.
- 5.) Bring School Districts into the formula for paying for Pre-School Special Education Programs --- Schools share 15%, County share 38%, and the State share would be 47% down from 59.5%. Taxpayers are impacted through their schools.
- 6.) Proposes increasing the funding to the Childhood Lead Poisoning Primary Prevention Program.
- 7.) Reductions in on-going grants amount to approximately \$196,847 and have resulted in reduced services
- 8.) Proposes the establishment of various fees and reimbursements in the Early Intervention Program:
 - Monthly parental fee based on income
 - Application fee for Approved Early Intervention Providers
 - Requires Early Intervention Providers seek reimbursement from third party providers.

Social Services Department: The Governor’s proposed budget includes the following:

1. Federal Flexible Fund amount is to be increased but it will have to cover more expenses which were paid for from other programs in the past.
2. The State Local Administrative fund is proposed to be eliminated; a \$3.1 million impact.
3. Elimination of Community Optional Preventative Services Program (COPS) funding which provides funding for such programs as SPFY, Utica Safe Schools, and Neighborhood Center.
4. Safety Net Assistance Program (SNAP) funding will be eliminated, contracts with Legal Aid for \$19,000 and Catholic Charities for \$40,000.
5. Youth Programs Block Grant is slated for a \$28 million dollar cut state wide.
6. Elimination of Purchases of Services COLA which will affect the agencies providing various preventative services under contract with Oneida County.
7. Child Care Block Grant will be reduced, resulting in more of the flexible fund to be used for day care services to stay at the present level.

Mental Health: The State proposed budget includes a reduction of state aid for Local Government Unit Administration which might possibly be offset by maximizing federal salary sharing resources. The rest of the proposed cuts, including the reduction of the COLA by 1%, reducing OMH Adult Inpatient capacity by 11%, 25% cut to after school program, Road to Recovery Program eliminated, will have a larger effect on the outside agencies Oneida County contracts with to provide the various services.

Office for the Aging: The Proposed Budget intends to eliminate or reduce various funding streams in the Office of the Aging. The total anticipated reductions are equal to \$143,303. These reductions will reduce various services including Home Meal deliveries, decrease rides for seniors to medical appointments, and the reduction of one FTE.

Probation Department: The proposed budget is reducing the various reimbursements the department receives a total of \$66,689. The budget also proposes a \$25.00 administrative fee to be levied on people sentenced to probation but it will not be part of the court order, so collection will be an administrative nightmare. It is estimated this fee will generate approximately \$7,000.

Planning – Mass Transit: The budget proposes cuts to the mass transit aid. It is anticipated the Planning Department will lose reimbursement for overseeing funds given to Birnie Bus.

“We recognize the need for less spending at the state level, but we cannot accept a budget that will provide higher taxes and fewer services,” Picente said. “We look forward to dialogue with our state representatives to produce a better budget that will meet the needs of the people of Oneida County.”