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### NEWS RELEASE

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## **Picente Announces 7-Point County Austerity Plan**

To protect taxpayers and preserve Oneida County's hard-won fiscal stability, Oneida County Executive Anthony J. Picente, Jr., today announced an Oneida County Government Austerity Plan that will severely limit spending.

"Business as usual has gone out the door. We need to act now to respond to conditions that are putting severe stress on the county's budget," Picente said. "Counties everywhere are seeing lower sales tax collections as a reflection of the economic conditions. Oneida County lifted its cap on sales taxes on gasoline in the expectation that this would produce revenue, but unless things change, we could be facing a revenue hole in the budget because we are getting less revenue than projected. The state budget as it stands shifts more costs onto our backs. Everywhere you look, counties are getting fiscally hammered."

"Every taxpayer out there knows our region, our state and our nation are in economic hard times, and that it is essential to maximize the impact of every dollar," Picente said. "My Austerity Plan will ensure that we are doing everything possible to hold the line so that we can continue to operate the programs the people of Oneida County need while also reducing the drain on our budget."

Picente said that the following austerity measures will be in place through June 1<sup>st</sup>. "At that time, we will assess our position, and decide if we need to take more drastic steps or make any further adjustments to the plan," Picente said. "Essential services will continue. We will plow roads. We will serve needy families and our seniors. We will also cut every possible expense and thoroughly scrutinize every spending request that comes in."

Picente's County Austerity Plan includes these steps:

1. All vehicle purchases are frozen immediately.
2. Overtime is prohibited for all departments except those with public safety or public works responsibilities – The Sheriff's Office, Airport, 911 Emergency Center and Public Works.
3. Any travel outside of Oneida County requires the prior approval of the County Executive and must be justified by a department head.

4. Purchase requisitions over \$250 will be reviewed by the County Executive's office.
5. No position requests will be forwarded by the County Executive to the Board of Legislators for approval unless a Department Head can document that the positions are essential and critical to the operation of vital departmental functions.
6. As positions are abolished when they become vacant, funding that was budgeted for those positions will be moved into a contingency account set up for this emergency.
7. Department heads will meet monthly with the County Executive and the budget/finance team to monitor spending, eliminate budget "hot spots," if any, and look for ways to further reduce spending through greater collaboration, efficiencies and consolidation.

"Because of the unique role of County Governments in New York State, there are things we cannot control, such as the mandates the state throws at us and the shrinking revenue streams that support mandated programs. What we can fully control is what we spend ourselves, and that is what we are doing," Picente said. "I am encouraged that state and federal officials are talking about helping counties in any stimulus plan, but I believe that we need to take a pro-active leadership role to control expenses, live with less, and then live with even less if need be."