

## 2019 State of the County Message

### Oneida County Executive Anthony J. Picente Jr.

Thank you to Daniele's and its staff for the fine job they've done in hosting this event. I also want to thank Eve Van de Wal for emceeing, Father Sean O'Brien for the invocation and the Oneida County Sheriff's Office Color Guard for presenting the colors.

I would like to start by acknowledging my partners in government. First and foremost, I want to recognize the unbelievable commitment and dedication of all our county government workers. They carry out our mission with professionalism and skill every single day. They are the best government workforce in the state. I want to thank the members of the Oneida County Board of Legislators for their service and dialogue, especially the Board Chairman Gerald Fiorini. I want to thank my department heads who implement the vision we outline through programs and services that meet the needs of our people. I want to thank Sheriff Robert Maciol, District Attorney Scott McNamara, County Clerk Sandra DePerno and Comptroller Joseph Timpano. I want to thank Mayor Robert Palmieri of Utica and Mayor Jacqueline Izzo of Rome for their continued partnerships.

I want to thank my wife Eleanor and my sisters and nieces who are here with me today for their constant support and encouragement.

As we gather here today, our unemployment rate is at a 10-year low. New and emerging high-tech industries are taking root, and our county fiscal foundation is stronger than ever as we've held the line on taxes for five – soon to be six years. Ladies and gentlemen, because of our work – together – the State of the Oneida County is strong. The strongest it's ever been.

Yet as we begin today, our nation's leaders struggle to find common ground. Our New York City-dominated state leaders have a vastly different world view than we do. Too many stand in Albany and celebrate the demise of hope, even the end of life, instead of investing in our future. Their politics have become a game of thrones with the winner getting nothing and reveling in the loss of needed jobs and economic opportunity.

Amazon's departure, or more accurately, its non-arrival, is a wakeup call for all communities, especially ours. Companies and businesses — whether they be retail, manufacturing or even health care — make choices as to where they want to be, and we in government must do our best to remove the barriers that prevent their success. But as we saw with Amazon, a small yet vocal resistance spreading fear, false information and innuendo, can completely derail any project, leaving that community with no fall back or alternative. While we continue to work to attract Amazon here to Oneida County, this effort has been made harder.

The Amazon debacle is a cautionary tale for our community as our state-of-the-art medical campus project elicits similar opposition from a small yet vocal crowd using fear and false information to attempt to derail \$600 million in investment in downtown Utica. We are long past an alternate site. If this project does not move forward now, there will be no new hospital and the health and well-being of this community will be placed in comfort care.

The first time I gave this address, I talked about innovation, economic competitiveness and transformation. I spoke about adopting a regional approach and creating community partnerships. I said we need to address quality-of-life, create efficient government and make our communities safer. Every day since, I have worked with everyone to achieve those goals.

We have always confronted the issues facing this community. We don't place blame, we find solutions. And as long as I remain your County Executive, this government will always tackle issues head on.

County government cannot tackle problems head on if it doesn't have a rock solid financial foundation from which all solutions stem. Since I came into office, this county's finances have been set on a fiscally conservative path and have become a vehicle for growth. We have created fund balances where none existed. We budgeted so we can effectively plan for the opportunities of tomorrow and respond to the crisis of the day. We began five-year budgeting. We reduced sales tax a quarter percent. We streamlined government through innovation to be more responsive and less expensive, and today we have the most efficient workforce since the 1970s.

Finally, we set aside a generation of lawsuits and acrimony, and through a partnership with the Oneida Nation, created a new revenue stream that has allowed us to present a budget six years in a row that did not require an increase in the Oneida County property tax levy.

Since I took office, the national credit rating agencies have upgraded us three separate times and today our rates are the highest in a generation. We have money in the bank. We have a stable tax rate. And we have a high credit rating. The fiscal state of the county is strong.

We evaluated the state of our aging infrastructure and took action. We invested. We were strategic. We rebuilt in a way that created the capacity necessary for growth.

Today, we continue to invest in our county roads and bridges. They are a crucial component to everything we do from public safety to economic development to tourism. My administration has spent over \$65 million on our roads and bridges. But of course, we didn't stop there.

Not long ago, the historic REA wing at Union Station was literally falling apart. I made it clear we would restore the neglected facility and find an appropriate use for it. Since 2011, we have invested \$3.7 million into the structure, creating the Oneida County Public Market and our return on that investment has been so much more than mere dollars and cents. The public market instantly became a catalyst for change in Bagg's Square with over 65 vendors from food, farm and artisan businesses.

It brought people downtown on a Saturday at a time when no one was coming. Since then, the public market, under the management of Beth Irons, has won numerous awards as one of the top venues in the country. The neighborhood has experienced dramatic growth. Bagg's Square today is one of the most vibrant places in Oneida County because we made the initial investment that helped get the ball rolling.

This year we will expand the contract to manage the market to a full-time position. We will also establish a Friends of the Public Market organization to help provide funding for programming and build long-term financial sustainability for the market into the future.

Today, we are launching the next phase of the Oneida County Public Market. The core of the building and the second floor — an 8,400-square foot open, undeveloped space — is ready to be reimaged. To guide this next phase, we will seek more input from the community with the REA Development Challenge, a request for information that utilizes this space and incorporates our public market into the surrounding Bagg's Square neighborhood. I'm excited to see what comes from the great minds of our community.

We have also invested in our community college. Under the leadership of President Randall VanWagoner it has become a place where students get the education and training they want, without the crippling student loan debt no one needs. MVCC has developed programs aligned with our community goals, such as masonry, carpentry, and expanded culinary programs, as well as Unmanned Aircraft Systems curriculum. We invested in MVCC's vision. We built the new athletic building in Utica, the Jorgenson Center. Then in 2017, we embarked on a \$33 million upgrade to the John D. Plumley Complex on the Rome Campus that has is transforming that entire area of the city.

In order for a community to grow, it must address significant issues that not everyone can see or recognize, but are of the utmost importance, such as water and sewer. The very first day I became County Executive, the New York State Department of Conservation mandated we fix our waste water treatment system. It literally put a moratorium on development. No one, private or public, would be able to grow if we didn't make changes. No new buildings, no new commerce, no new economic activity in any way. Meanwhile the system was faulty. The county system — along with every village, town and city pipe — had been ignored for far too long and was on the brink of collapse. We did not bury our head in the sand. We rose to the challenge. We came to a resolution and the moratorium was lifted.

We embarked on a \$300 million system overhaul called Operation Ripple Effect. We added and repaired interceptor lines, created more capacity for the system to accept and clean water and corrected our overflow issues. We enhanced the ability of this county to sustain itself and grow by solving the problem. Today, we have repaired 130 miles of pipe, renovated the Sauquoit Creek Pumping Station and completed nearly 95% of the construction of the Water Pollution Control Plant which included the installation of two anaerobic digesters which are turning wastewater into renewable energy.

We took the same approach when it came to flooding. While the Federal Emergency Management Agency has repeatedly denied us assistance, we refused to do nothing while families and businesses were suffering.

We began in 2014 by completing six high-target flood mitigation projects. In July of 2017, when flooding hit once again, we stepped up. We placed \$250,000 directly into the hands of over 100 residents who needed help to return or remain in their homes. We worked with municipalities and provided funding to assist with the cleanup, thereby helping the taxpayers in those towns and villages. Over the course of six years we will have accomplished something unprecedented: a \$12 million investment in flood mitigation efforts that reaches all across our county.

In order to have a growing community you have to have a safe community. That is why public safety has been a priority of my administration since I took office. I have enjoyed a great working relationship with both Sheriff Maciol and District Attorney McNamara and together we have made this community safer and more secure and our government more responsive.

We invested in cutting edge training simulators for fire and police. We equipped local law enforcement with tactical Kevlar vests. We funded the Mercy Flight Helicopter Emergency Response Team. We invested in state-of-the-art air vans for the fire service.

We created a consolidated countywide 911 system. It's the epitome of successful cooperation and consolidation of government functions. It's a system that allows for a faster, more accurate response, all while saving Utica, Rome and New Hartford millions of dollars a year. We were a national leader in adopting text to 911 and the ability to send photos and video will soon follow. We are implementing a countywide, interagency radio system so all our police and fire agencies can talk to one another and 911 during emergencies. We are rolling out our emergency records management system allowing every police agency to share their vital information. These tools are essential for law enforcement, emergency response and for the conviction of criminals. Everyone is safer today because of these advancements. A separate system run by individual cities and towns could never make these types of investments.

In order to be safer we needed better data and a better system for law enforcement and medical professionals. That is why we eliminated an antiquated coroner system and moved to a modern medical examiner system. Police now have the forensic tools at their disposal to better solve our most heinous crimes. For the first time, all families can have the closure they deserve when a loved one passes away and better understand their own family medical history. The system, and the data it provides us is essential to the public health and safety of this community.

Let me show you how. One of the most critical issues facing our community is the opioid crisis. Anecdotally, we know it touches everyone in this room, but until recently we didn't know exactly how. Now we do. So please, will everyone holding a white card stand up? Forty-three. You 43 represent the average number of overdose deaths per year in Oneida County since 2013. Look at them. They're your neighbors, friends, sons and daughters.

Now let's compare that to another public health issue that we have far more experience with. Will everyone with a blue card please stand up? Four. You four represent the average per year of alcohol-related traffic deaths in Oneida County since 2013.

We are winning the fight against drunk driving. Now we must come together and make the same concerted effort to fight the opioid crisis. This is a fight we cannot afford to lose.

We know education works. For over 30 years the county took the lead on educating the community on the devastating effects of driving under the influence of alcohol. You have seen the results of that effort illustrated today.

Today, we redouble our efforts to fight opiate addiction. We will partner with non-profit organizations, law enforcement and medical professionals to launch a concerted, coordinated, publicly-funded education campaign aimed at reducing opiate abuse in our community.

We must fight this scourge together. This national epidemic's mortal consequences are laid at our doorsteps each and every day. In the fight against opiate abuse we created the Opiate Task Force with a strong community steering committee on which the Sheriff, District Attorney and myself serve as chairs. We placed prescription drug returns in police stations all across the county. We funded peer advocates and family support navigators. We equipped all first responders throughout the county with Narcan, as well as informational material for next steps once victims are revived and the immediate emergency is over. In 2019, we will launch the Oneida County Overdose Response Team.

We also are holding responsible those who spread this epidemic in the name of naked profit. Like big tobacco, certain pharmaceutical companies have misled the public about the addictive nature of opioids, which have ravaged communities like ours. Since they refuse to take responsibility, the county has brought a lawsuit to hold them accountable and recoup the substantial public costs of fighting this plague.

As we continue to contend with the opioid epidemic, we must prepare to contend with another drug-related challenge: the legalization of marijuana that is pending in the state legislature. One of my first positions in public life was STOP-DWI Coordinator, and from that experience, I have consistently opposed the legalization of marijuana. Once again upstate New York will have to contend with New York City values being imposed on us from Albany. It would be irresponsible for us to ignore the reality and how that decision will affect our future.

This issue remains multifaceted. Medicinal use, which I have supported. Recreational use. Law enforcement. CBD products. Industrial hemp. What does it mean for our families, employers and our law enforcement community and more? I will convene a series of town halls throughout the county this spring and summer, focused on all these different aspects to inform myself, and other elected officials as to what members of our community think on this topic. I want to hear from farmers, health care providers, law enforcement, medical marijuana patients, advocates for recreational use and others, to formulate a deeper understanding of all the issues, costs and benefits. At the end of the day, we are going to be dealing with the ramifications of a decision in Albany that we have little ability to stop. I believe we should be ready for those consequences and move forward with a plan the community believes in with the appropriate safeguards.

A year ago, this community was shaken by the threat at Utica College. It brought home our worst fears of tragedies such as the Parkland and Columbine shootings, but thanks to the swift response and thorough investigation by our local law enforcement agencies, the suspect was apprehended, convicted and just recently received a sentence that sent a strong message that such acts will not be tolerated. Thank you to District Attorney Scott McNamara and all those involved in the investigation for bringing this sad chapter to a conclusion.

This incident served as a stark reminder that when it comes to safety, there is no more important priority than our children. Everyone always talks about the importance of keeping children safe. Doing something about it, sadly, is sometimes a different matter. Last year, I outlined such a plan and put it into action. Since then, we placed armed Sheriff's Office Special Patrol Officers in nearly every school building in Oneida County. Over 60 officers. They are law enforcement professionals and they protect our students every single day.

Some of them are here with us, let's have them stand up and give them a round of applause.

Our Department of Emergency Services is developing emergency safety plans for every soft target that needs one: daycares, schools, senior centers and churches.

We don't stop there.

Every day we send our social service caseworkers into the field to ensure the safety and welfare of children and the elderly. We needed to find ways to make that job — which is one of the most difficult under the best of circumstances — and the people doing it, as safe and effective as possible. We added new communication and GPS technology. We also embedded into the division, sheriff's deputies and probation officers to break down the silos between enforcement, probation and services, and to provide armed accompaniment.

In order to keep our at-risk children safe, we need more caseworkers. The vacancy rate is too high. We embarked on an advertising campaign that utilized social media, and for the first time, we had over 100 people sign up to take the civil service exam to fill 35 vacancies.

Two years ago, we began the reorganization of the Department of Social Services. Under the leadership of Commissioner Colleen Fahy-Box, we created new positions that gave us needed flexibility. We overhauled our HR and training units and implemented new procedures. We began customer service training. We created a homeless unit and updated policies and procedures to modernize the department. Still a clear barrier remained.

This year, I will propose to the Board of Legislators a charter revision that will knock down those silos once and for all. We will consolidate the Department of Social Services, Office for Aging and Continuing Care, Veterans Department and the Youth Bureau into one cohesive department. The Department of Community and Family Services.

We will launch this newly restructured department with a bold goal for our community. A new initiative that will identify homeless veterans and deliver the help they need so they will always have a roof over their heads. By 2022, we will eradicate veteran homelessness in Oneida County. It can be done. We will do it. We owe them that.

Will every veteran here today please stand? Thank you for your service.

In 2013, we launched Vision 2020, a countywide collaborative effort to create an action plan that prepared us to fill the needs of a changing community by building the capacity necessary for growth. We needed a people plan that would address the workforce, opportunity, housing, transportation and other regional needs.

Vision 2020 includes more than 100 community leaders who have come together over the past five years to create this plan and put it in motion. Their enthusiasm and dedication is second-to-none and they have done something remarkable.

You can see progress reports for Vision 2020 online at our county website, but I want to hit some of the highlights. In order for a community to grow it needs to have these efforts in place. Employers big and small all need to know their needs will be met.

One thing about Vision 2020 was apparent: we needed to address the changing community so that access and opportunity would be open and available to people of all races, ethnicities and religions.

When we began today we were led in the Pledge of Allegiance by new American citizen Edin Patkovic and his wife Mahira. Edin, originally from Bosnia, just passed his citizenship test in January and was sworn in on February 7th. His wife Mahira has been in the U.S. since she was 8 years-old. Before they fled war-torn Bosnia, Mahira's father was shot in the arm and is unable to move his fingers due to the muscle damage. As the war raged, it became harder to find work or food. When they finally fled, they left their entire family behind to start a new life in America, and like many refugees, came to our community to resettle.

In the third grade, Mahira came home from school in tears, her mother asked her what was wrong and she said: "Everyone speaks English, mama. I'm not going back." Her mother, through tears of her own said to Mahira: "You have to keep going." And she did. She kept going to school. She started working at 15 years-old, right in this very establishment. Today she has a bachelor's degree, is getting her masters and works in my office. This impressive couple also owns a business in downtown Utica and they are expecting their first born child. Let's have both Mahira and Edin stand up.

One thing in Mahira's story that sticks out is her struggle with the language barrier. An important step taken by the Vision 2020 Access and Opportunity Committee was to streamline the community's English as a Second Language offerings.

The housing committee helped industrial development agencies create a uniform housing incentive policy which is spurring the housing market and the creation of lofts and repurposing of old buildings.

The education committee has increased internships here by a whopping 200%.

Vision 2020's Transportation Committee has been instrumental in the creation of 30 new biking routes. They have begun a study to incorporate smart technology in our transportation networks, a pedestrian study so we can make our downtowns as walkable as possible. They identified where WiFi should be in transportation hubs, and as a result, Union Station now has free public WiFi, and in the spring, so will the REA Wing.

When companies reach out to my administration to talk about the possibility of locating or expanding here they look at Vision 2020 as a key selling point. They have confidence their workforce's needs will be met.

When we look to strengthen our economy we must be committed to our biggest industry: agriculture. Through our partners at Cornell Cooperative Extension, my administration has invested nearly \$10 million to advance the work it does in our farming community.

We have worked to strengthen agriculture in a myriad of ways. We completed the Oneida County Farmland Protection Plan. We created an Ag-Tourism marketing plan.

We have invested in our Farm and Food Incubator with our partners at MVCC and CCE and are currently in Phase 2 of this essential piece of our food economy ecosystem.

We are creating a framework of zoning and planning ordinances that will facilitate growth in all aspects of agriculture from traditional farming to dairy farming to craft beverages. We call it Ag Friendly, and our towns are currently working with CCE to let farmers and food entrepreneurs know they are open for business.

Dairy farmers are struggling and we refuse to leave them behind. We created and are implementing the Oneida County Dairy Farmers Sustainability Action Plan. The plan has six goals with 44 action items. We will convene our newly-formed Ag Advisory Board on March 27<sup>th</sup>.

Strong governments have thriving assets. Never has that been more clear than at Griffiss International Airport. An airport that is quickly becoming something unique in all of the nation. First, we committed to being a general aviation airport and privatized our fixed-based operations. That decision has saved taxpayers millions and made us a more attractive location for general aviation flights. Since the change, we hit record fuel sales. We invested in our infrastructure securing nearly \$70 million in state and federal funding. We also built a new terminal, customs and office building that has been a vital piece of our growth.

Then in 2013, we took a chance on a true game changer. We got in on the ground floor of a new industry. One that would create an economic engine for many years to come. We seized that opportunity and became one of only seven FAA UAS test sites in the entire country. This was a bold initiative and has placed us at the forefront of an industry that will touch all aspects of our everyday life.

We have invested in the technology. We entered into a partnership with NASA. We purchased \$4 million in range instrumentation, making us the only test site in the country with that technology allowing us to establish the first unmanned traffic corridor.

To date, more than 50 companies have conducted UAS testing at Griffiss. This includes companies such as NAVMAR, Microdrones, Aurora Flight Sciences, Drone Delivery Canada and Lockheed Martin. When they come, they bring researchers, scientists, pilots and more for weeks at a time. We have hosted industry-leading conventions and symposiums allowing us to present Griffiss and our region to the world. Its economic impact ripples throughout the county.

We have now partnered with the U.S. Air Force Research Lab to create Sky Dome, an indoor UAS test site.

Working together with the NUAIR Alliance and CenterState CEO, 27 companies have now created or committed to 1,400 jobs in the Mohawk Valley and Central New York UAS industry, and that number continues to grow every day. Another example of bold action with proven results moving us forward.

One of our region's most important economic drivers is tourism which adds \$1.5 billion annually to our economy. Outside of New York City, we lead the state in that category, besting places that are home to NFL and NHL franchises and even the Winter Olympics.

We could not move forward and make all the strategic investments we've outlined if we didn't settle the decades-long county and state lawsuits with the Oneida Nation. Last year marked the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary for the Turning Stone Resort and Casino and the fifth anniversary of our partnership. In 2013, decades of animosity was set aside in favor of a win-win partnership that benefits everyone who calls Oneida County home. Let me put it this way. In the first year of our partnership, the county received \$12.5 million in revenue. To put that in perspective, in order to generate that revenue from property taxes, we would've had to raise them 16% in just that year. To date, we have received over \$60 million in gaming revenue and the revenue continues to grow every year.

But our partnership is about so much more than the revenue. It's the collaboration that changes the community. We have hosted two AHL All-Star Games, where the Oneidas were the main sponsor. We have been able to invest in infrastructure, public safety, literacy education, and so much more through this partnership. We continue to work together on economic development, tourism and unique opportunities essential to a thriving community.

The Adirondack Bank Center is another key spoke in the wheel of tourism in Oneida County. From the start, Governor Cuomo has been a steadfast partner in revitalizing our historic auditorium. Oneida County has also been a leader in that success story. We worked with Mohawk Valley Garden to secure the funding necessary to bring the American Hockey League back to Utica. Now, the building has been completely renovated with \$20 million in state funding. Here's the thing about state funding. They don't just give you the money. You have to spend it and then get reimbursed. Let's be clear, your county government was the only government in the position to front every penny of that money. Without that financial wherewithal, the \$20 million would have never gone into the building.

None of us are satisfied stopping there. The district has to keep moving forward. In addition to the Comets, the Adirondack Bank Center is now home to the Utica City FC Major Arena Soccer League team, and in its inaugural season, it's one of the hottest tickets in town. The action is fast and exciting, and our team is playing great. All of this brings people into downtown Utica, enjoying themselves and the city. The economic impact is huge.

We are going to build upon that success even more and continue with the next phase of the U-District: the Nexus Center sports complex. We worked together, and across the aisle, to secure up to \$22 million in state funding for the project. I will work with the Aud Authority to secure the necessary financing to begin the project this year. This new complex will be home to three sheets of ice and fields, and with it will come tournament-based play, and with that, hundreds of thousands of annual visitors. The estimated new visitor spend in Oneida County for the Nexus Center alone is \$26.7 million a year.

As we move forward on Nexus, we continue to explore the full build out of the U-District. As an economic impact study shows, the U-District has numerous region-wide benefits. 1.6 million annual visitors. \$112 million net new economic impact spending every single year. And it would create over 1,000 jobs.

As I said earlier, it's time to move forward with a new downtown medical campus. It's not only the right thing for our health care, it's also a once-in-a-generation opportunity for economic impact.

We must now begin the real work of connecting the economic dots to create a clearer picture for that impact in and around the hospital. I'm charging my Director of Economic Development, David Catalfamo, to work with our partners to facilitate and attract new investment in and around the MVHS campus. Ancillary and support businesses such as doctor's offices, testing services, medical office buildings and other professional services. We will also look at strengthening our vibrant quality of life options that will benefit our growing downtown every day.

Another issue confronting our community is the lack of building trade workers. Seventy-percent of construction companies nationwide are having trouble finding qualified workers, according to the Associated General Contractors of America. We need to be able to fill the jobs necessary to keep up with the development we see all around us. We will work with our partners, including BOCES, Workforce Solutions, and the Builder's Exchange, as well as trade unions and industry partners through New York's Associated General Contractors, to create a plan focused on career and technical education, job awareness and marketing, as well as small business development. This will let people of all ages know that in this community, someone with a trade and the ability to work hard, can find a rewarding job that earns a great living. Not only that, but they can increase their skills, own their own businesses and know that the sky is the limit. We need contractors, plumbers, carpenters and so much more. Together we can fill these needs.

Our economy is always changing. You have to change with it or you will get left behind. Too often when we think of economic development we think of attraction. The big project. Amazon. Global Foundries. And yes, Premier and AMS. These projects are high risk and high reward.

This year, I'm asking this community to take a chance on something completely different. Instead of looking outside our community for the answers, it's time we looked harder at the assets that are already here and invest within. It's time to cultivate an innovation-based economy.

Why do so many new companies form in Silicon Valley, New York City and the 128 Beltway of Massachusetts?

Let me give you hint:

It's not because taxes are lower.

It's not because it's easier to do business.

It's not because they are smarter – we educate more students in upstate New York and over \$2 billion is spent on research at Rome Lab alone.

And it certainly isn't because they work harder – we have the hardest working people in the world.

It's because they have built and invested in a culture that celebrates, supports and cultivates entrepreneurship and innovation.

We need to embark on an effort to foster that kind of culture right here.

Leaders of our innovation class, such as Frank DuRoss, Enessa Carbone and Alicia Dicks, and Martin Babinec, the founder of Upstate Venture Connect, met with the team from the Innovation Collective in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho to map out a new path. The Innovation Collective specializes in helping communities unlock economic prosperity by leveraging the hubs of innovation that reflect the unique history, strengths and passion of the people.

Our community can lead a regionwide transformation and begin a new chapter that garners the attention of the rest of the world.

The MVCC Foundation will be the contracting agency and I have directed my government to work with them and the IC Team to help foster this change. We will grow our burgeoning innovation-based economy.

Together we have built a better, stronger and more vibrant Oneida County. One that is fiscally sound, responsive to its people and safer for all who live and visit here. We have cast aside the pessimism of the past and replaced it with a new optimism of the possible.

It has taken a great deal of hard work by many in this room and many more in the community. And there is much more to do. The work of this county government is never ending and filled with challenges and opportunity. I have been up to those challenges every day that I walk into this office, and I continue to seek every opportunity to make this county a better place.

There are those among us who seek only to disrupt our hopes and dreams with anger, lies and negativity. Yet I see a county that is resilient and proud, a county that was built by people who work together not apart, who seek peace and not hatred, who look to the future not the past, who want an even better tomorrow for their children than they had. That is the Oneida County I live in. That is the county I am proud to lead.

Henry Kissinger said: "The task of a leader is to get his people from where they are to where they have not been."

Let's continue the work we've done together to make Oneida County the best it can be. Let's make 2019 the year we get to where we have not been.

Thank you and God Bless Oneida County and God Bless the United States of America.