



**NEWS FROM THE OFFICE OF
ULSTER COUNTY EXECUTIVE MIKE HEIN**



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
February 15, 2011

Contact: James J. Hanson
845.802.3138
jhns@co.ulster.ny.us

**2011 STATE OF THE COUNTY ADDRESS: MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN
2010 BUT CHALLENGES ARE STILL AHEAD FOR 2011**

In his 2011 State of the County address, delivered before the County Legislature, Ulster County Executive Mike Hein detailed the major accomplishments of 2010 and conveyed a cautionary warning with regard to the financial challenges Ulster County will face in 2011. He also said that with strong leadership and bipartisan cooperation Ulster County can continue to move in the right direction. With a 0% tax increase in 2011 and a strong bond rating the Ulster County Executive remains committed to continue to streamline government, protect taxpayers and help small businesses. This is despite the fact that like all New York counties, Ulster County continues to face financial challenges.

The County Executive said, "Make no mistake, the challenges we face as a county and a country are real and so are the dangers, but as Americans we are amazing people, a beacon of freedom for an entire world. We are strong, diverse, and full of innovation. These times are challenging but it is no time to shy away. It is time to embrace change and to see it for what it is: the next great opportunity to reshape our county and our country into a new and better version of what it has always been, the greatest place on the face of this earth."

In his address, the County Executive emphasized the serious challenges facing Ulster County such as:

- A slow national economy;
- A state budget proposal that will likely impact counties across the state;
- Pension fund contributions that are currently at \$15 million dollars and rising and have increased over 3000% in the past five years;

- Employee health care expenses are now a \$23 million expense and continue to rise;
- Unchecked State mandates and the possibility of a tax cap without mandate relief; and
- New York State's \$10 billion budget deficit.

To alleviate the impact on the local property taxpayers, County Executive Hein called upon the State to enact meaningful mandate reform and asked all county residents to contact their state representatives to urge the same.

The County Executive said, "New York State mandates don't drive up State taxes, they drive up local County property taxes. Just 9 state mandates eat up 90% of the property tax levy statewide."

Despite the difficult circumstances, the County Executive detailed the significant reforms, cost-cutting actions and government initiatives his administration has taken to protect County taxpayers, support local business and provide high quality services. The accomplishments he stated were:

- A 0% County Property Tax increase for 2011;
- The restructure of the Ulster County Department of Health;
- The restructure and shared services agreements in the Department of Public Works, which saved \$2.3 million;
- The reduction of the County payroll by \$3.3 million since 2010;
- The launch of www.ulsterbizhelp.com to provide local businesses with a single point of access for assistance;
- The creation of an initiative designed to promote shovel-ready site development;
- The free flu shots for the most vulnerable County residents;
- The business support to Canal Street Cutlery that helped them expand their business;
- The elimination of entry fees at Sojourner Truth Park;
- The merger of the City of Kingston fire dispatch with the Ulster County 911;

- The protection of County residents by enacting the Taxpayer First initiative; and
- The partnership with County Clerk Nina Postupack to provide Veterans with a discount card to be used at local stores.

In his speech, the County Executive focused on the recent interactions with the New York City Department of Environmental Protection (DEP). For decades it was inconceivable that any local government could take on the mighty DEP and force it to change, but County Executive Hein did. The DEP was polluting the water of Ulster County, endangering our farms and showing a total disregard for Ulster County's pristine environment.

During his address, the County Executive announced that the New York State DEC has agreed with him, and just yesterday served a Notice of Hearing and Complaint to the DEP. Among other things, the Notice of Hearing and Complaint would prohibit any future releases without DEC approval and Ulster County consultation. The DEC has also asked for an independent damage assessment, which the County Executive has also demanded, and \$2.6 million in civil penalties.

Finally, The County Executive called upon the Legislature to embrace its policy making role by taking action on the looming question of the future of Golden Hill. He underscored the growing danger of a major infrastructure failure at the 40 year old facility.

“Regardless of your perspective, everybody really wants the same basic thing: we all want people in need within our community to have access to high quality care,” said County Executive Mike Hein. “As County Executive, I believe people deserve this, regardless of their ability to pay. But the questions before this Legislature still remain: does County government need to operate a nursing home to accomplish this goal and can County taxpayers afford the \$70 to \$80 million new construction or renovation price tag, plus the multi-million dollar operating increases?”

The County Executive concluded by asking the Legislature to partner with him to build a better Ulster County for everyone.

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