



Press Release

Monroe County Democratic Caucus

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For Immediate Release

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Cruz asks Administration to Rescind Harsh Burial Benefits Policy

Rochester, New York – June 12, 2006: This morning, Monroe County Legislator José Cruz submitted a proposal calling on the County Administration to rescind the changes made earlier this year to the county's burial benefits policy for indigent persons.

The county's Supplemental Funeral Assistance Program covers funeral and burial expenses for those who die leaving no funds to pay for these costs. Under the new policy, which went into effect on March 1, the average grant has been cut by approximately \$600. Rather than funding both funeral and burial expenses, the new policy provides a "block grant" that in many cases won't cover the costs of burial. This means that for an estimated 800 decedents this year in Monroe County, cremation may be the only option.

Cruz's proposal includes calling for a consortium of community representatives, including advocates for the indigent, funeral directors and cemetery owners, to work cooperatively with the Administration to craft a new burial policy that will be mutually acceptable to all parties. In the interim, Cruz says, the previous Supplemental Funeral Assistance Program policies should remain in effect.

"I believe that there is a community solution to this issue," said Cruz, "and while we work to arrive at it, we must ensure that the county is providing fair and decent treatment to all of its citizens."

This proposal will be considered by the Monroe County Legislature during the July 2006 cycle. Committees are scheduled for the week of June 26.

A copy of the proposal is attached.

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