



For Release:
2:00 p.m. • 13 April 2006

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PRESS RELEASE

Minority Leader Palumbo Responds to Brooks' 19% - \$61 Million Tax Increase

ROCHESTER, NEW YORK – 13 APRIL 2006: Democrats in the Monroe County Legislature responded this afternoon to County Executive Maggie Brooks' call to raise taxes and labeled it as "...an ill-conceived plan that will have devastating consequences for the local economy."

Brooks' sales tax increase will see Monroe County's sales tax rate dwarf neighboring communities' such as Ontario County where Eastview Mall retailers will enjoy a tax rate that is fully 1.75% LESS than the burden placed on Monroe County retailers.

"This is a troubling proposal that is misguided and divisive," said Democratic Minority Leader Carla Palumbo. "There is another way to approach this crisis that does not increase taxes or set up this precedent of swooping in and taking sales tax revenue from towns, schools and the City to solve the County's budget deficit."

Democrats proposed a plan just 24 hours before that eliminated the looming \$100 million deficit without raising taxes. The Republican plan increases the County Portion of the sales tax by almost 19% -- over \$61 Million.

Democratic Legislators who represent Suburban Towns were equally disturbed by the Republican proposal.

"The Brooks Tax Increase Plan will increase sales taxes, and does nothing to address the unfair subsidies that disproportionately benefit wealthier towns," said Ted O'Brien, who represents Irondequoit. "Our plan avoids increasing taxes, and brings fairness to Monroe County budget priorities."

Paul Haney, whose Legislative District straddles the city and the Town of Brighton said that he thought the plan would act as a deterrent to economic expansion. "At a time when we're doing everything we can to create jobs and attract business to this community, a tax increase of this magnitude would have disastrous implications," he said.

Assistant Minority Leader, Harry Bronson, whose district also straddles the City line into Henrietta and Brighton, joined others in his astonishment. "This is a divisive proposal that tries to solve the county fiscal crisis — created in part by poor past policies -- with a regressive tax strategy. Other counties such as Erie, Onondaga, and Albany all have large medicaid costs like Monroe -- yet, they have not asked to have sales taxes increased to this level."

Palumbo suggested that the County Executive reconsider. "County Executive Brooks began this process by seeking input from throughout the community. Her plan to increase taxes ignores any of that input. I urge her to come to the table and consider some of the initiatives we proposed in the Democrat Blueprint for Progress before taking this drastic and ultimately disastrous action."

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Carla Palumbo, Minority Leader • Calvin Lee & Harry Bronson, Assistant Minority Leaders
Jennifer Skoog-Harvey, Chief of Staff