



Media Alert

Monroe County Democratic Caucus

Monroe County Office Building
39 West Main Street, 4th Floor, Rm. 408
Rochester, NY 14614
P 585-753-1940 F 585-753-1946

For Immediate Release

Contact: Clarke Condé Phone: 753-1910

Democratic Caucus Moves to Reign In COMIDA's Illegal Funneling of Public Money

Rochester, New York – September 10, 2007. The Democratic Caucus of the Monroe County Legislature will hold a press conference at 11:30 AM today to detail proposed legislation to bring oversight to the County of Monroe Industrial Development Agency (COMIDA) after the New York State Comptroller released a report indicating that County officials used COMIDA to funnel \$2.5 million in state grants to AirTran Airways as a direct gift.

According to the Comptroller Thomas P. DiNapoli's report, funds that were meant to reimburse the County for capital improvements projects were given to AirTran Airlines to induce the low-cost air carrier to bring its service to the Greater Rochester International Airport. The audit further concludes that County officials and COMIDA deliberately tried to keep this transaction hidden from the public. Specifically, the Comptroller states, "The County used COMIDA to hide the transaction from competing airlines . . . in an attempt to keep competing airlines from learning of the subsidy arrangement and demanding similar treatment."

The New York State Constitution prohibits the County from making a gift of public money to a private entity, and COMIDA lacks statutory authority to do so. The audit further indicates that Monroe County officials violated New York State law by failing to place State grant reimbursement funds in a reserve fund to be used to pay outstanding debt.

The Democratic Caucus has submitted legislation to bring public oversight to COMIDA and has asked the District Attorney's office to conduct a criminal investigation. Details will be available at the press conference.

WHAT: Press Conference

WHEN: Monday, September 10th at 11:30 AM

**WHERE: Democratic Minority Office
Room 408
Monroe County Office Building
39 West Main Street
Rochester, New York**

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