



Media Release

Monroe County Democratic Caucus

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For Immediate Release

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Democrats say Legislature President Setting Dangerous Precedent

Rochester, New York – May 21, 2008. Democrats in the Monroe County Legislature are expressing serious concern with the Republican majority's repeated and unfounded refusal to allow for consideration of legislative oversight of the County's involvement in the Renaissance Square project.

Democrats began their calls for legislative scrutiny of the project with a proposal in February seeking a bipartisan panel to oversee the County's involvement in the Renaissance Square project, but that proposal was rejected by Legislature President Wayne Zyra on the advice of the county attorney, despite the fact that the Legislature has an attorney of its own. Subsequent to the February rejection, Democrats were able to obtain a copy of the County's contract with the Main & Clinton Local Development Corporation (LDC). The contract contained provisions which mandate the County to pay over 65% of the local portion of the project's cost. This commitment of County funds gives the Legislature the power and responsibility to scrutinize these expenditures. Accordingly, a second proposal was submitted to seek legislative review of the County's expenditures on the project, but this proposal was also rejected by the President on the same grounds.

"The Republican majority's blind acceptance of the administration's claim that this Legislature lacks the power to oversee our own expenses is extremely disconcerting. A project of this magnitude should be subjected to legislative oversight. Only then can the public be reasonably assured that their tax dollars are being used as efficiently as possible," said Legislator Paul Haney (D-Rochester, Brighton).

"If this project is ever going to succeed, the public must have confidence that it will be completed in a transparent, inclusive manner. There is simply no legitimate reason for legislative oversight to be stifled by President Zyra. If we have spent County funds on a project, we demand to know how those funds have been used; it's as simple as that," said Assistant Democratic Leader Calvin Lee (D-Rochester).

"Each and every member of this legislature should be extremely alarmed that we are being told that we have no right to oversee a project which includes millions of County tax payer dollars. The precedent set by this decision is wrong and it must be reversed," said Democratic Leader Harry Bronson (D-Rochester, Brighton & Henrietta).

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