

Cut legislative seats to save money



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GUEST ESSAYISTS

We recently introduced a proposal to downsize the Monroe County Legislature from 29 seats to 15 seats. Conservative estimates of this proposal show it would cut at least \$500,000 every year from the Legislature's budget, a 25 percent reduction. If passed by the Legislature, this measure would be placed on the ballot for voter approval this November.

Taxpayers have made it

very clear they want to see real spending cuts wherever and whenever possible to reduce the cost of government. In Monroe County, the budget situation has been worsening for more than a decade. We are now facing an enormous \$109 million structural budget deficit over the next two years. Specific long-term proposals to address this deficit have been few and far between.

The proposal we recently unveiled, supported by all of our Democratic colleagues, will reduce the deficit by more than \$1 million. These are permanent spending cuts that will recur in the future, beginning the difficult process of directly reducing the structural budget gap to prevent a fiscal crisis.

It is important to note a few other key aspects of this proposal:

First, it will have no adverse impact on the delivery of services to the public, since the Legislature will still perform all its duties and all residents will be represented.

Second, it will bring us in line with other counties throughout New York state, many of whom have recently downsized, such as Erie County.

Third, it will require a countywide referendum vote in the November general election.

Furthermore, this proposal was introduced early to give extra time for public review. Unfortunately, our Republican colleagues dismissed it immediately with a typical partisan reaction. Instead of considering the

benefits, they cried Democrats were trying to steal power and recited talking points that blame mandated costs for our budget woes. Ironically, this proposal does not change the fact that redistricting is controlled by Republicans.

Taxpayers deserve better. It is time to get serious about addressing this looming deficit. We stand ready to work and compromise with our Republican colleagues to ensure that taxpayers get the best services at the lowest possible cost. This proposal is an important first step to identifying spending reductions to address the budget crisis. □

Bronson is minority leader of the Monroe County Legislature; Esposito is a member.