

# County budget trumpets misguided priorities

By TED O'BRIEN AND  
VINCENT ESPOSITO

For the past three years we have lived through the worst economy in generations. Retirement savings have been decimated, wages have been stagnant and unemployment remains high as jobs remain elusive. Governments at all levels have been forced to craft budgets that cut services, lay off workers and even raise revenues from strained taxpayers in an attempt to manage growing deficits while also trying to boost the sluggish economy.

But in Monroe County it's been business as usual — and not in a good way.

Led by County Executive Maggie Brooks, Republicans recently passed a budget that cuts services and raises property taxes for the 10th straight year. Even worse, it pushes taxpayers further over the barrel of financial ruin by borrowing more from the future to pay for today's bills without doing anything to improve the serious, long-term deficit problem.



O'Brien



Esposito

Despite this dire situation, this budget raises the salaries for Republican political appointees for a third straight year and Republican legislators even slipped in a last-minute pay raise for Sheriff Patrick O'Flynn.

These pay raises show the real priorities of the local Republican party. While business struggle to survive and rank and file county workers enter their fourth year without a contract, a cadre of career political insiders will have raked in well over \$2 million in raises from taxpayers and the sheriff is in line to receive more than \$50,000 — an incredible 41 percent increase — over the next

three years. It is clear that they care more about their own well-being than that of the taxpayers or citizens of our community.

The sheriff's increase will "earn" him a higher salary than the governor. By contrast, Gov. Cuomo, demonstrated real leadership during tough times by cutting his own salary and all of his staff by 5 percent when he came into office. Furthermore, that a countywide elected official would give no public notice and allow no public input of such a dramatic increase in his taxpayer salary and that the county executive and Republican legislators would approve it demonstrates a stunning lack of transparency or respect for taxpayers. And that's not even considering the sheriff's job performance was just called into question by the state Commission on Corrections over the recent jail escape, or that the county charter says pay increases shall be recommended by an independent compensation committee.

This fall's election season was filled

with promises of bipartisanship and putting taxpayers first. Needless to say, it is very disappointing to find out already that those campaign promises will continue to ring hollow in Monroe County, where Republican leadership says one thing and then does another.

Nevertheless, we must push forward to do better in the coming year. The public trust placed in us requires that we overcome petty partisanship for the betterment of our community.

We will face many more challenges in the future. It is our commitment to you that we will approach each and every one of them with an open mind, renewed diligence and with the goal of doing what is best for you, the people we are privileged to represent.

**Ted O'Brien, a Democrat from Irondequoit, is the minority leader in the County Legislature and represents the 17th District, while Democrat Vincent Esposito is deputy minority leader and represents the 16th District.**