

2014 STATE OF THE COUNTY ADDRESS
Delivered by Nassau County Executive Edward P. Mangano
March 11, 2014

Good evening and welcome!

I would like to begin by thanking Presiding Officer Norma Gonsalves, Minority Leader Kevan Abrahams and all of our Nassau County Legislators for hosting this State of the County Address.

I appreciate the presence of my colleagues in government - District Attorney Kathleen Rice, Comptroller George Maragos and members of our learned judiciary. Legislator Fran Becker, thank you for leading us in our National Anthem.

Thank you to our veterans for serving as honor guard this evening. Will all our veterans please stand and be recognized. On behalf of a grateful nation, I thank you for your service and dedication.

Let us all now take a moment and posthumously honor Veteran Service Agency Executive Director Joseph Pascarella who passed away last year -- a man I believe was the finest director this agency has ever had.

Joe leaves behind a legacy of un-parallel service to our veterans.

Under his leadership the Veterans Service Agency created unprecedented housing opportunities for returning veterans, single parent veterans and active duty military.

According to data released by the United States Veterans Administration, counselors at the Nassau County V.S.A. significantly increased the annual amount of cash awards received by local veterans. It rose from under \$1 million in 2006 to \$9.3 million in 2013. The V.S.A. is on pace to secure a record breaking \$10+ million in benefits for local veterans this year.

Veteran and county legislator Dennis Dunne and I join you all in remembering Joe Pascarella for his outstanding efforts and lasting legacy. We are honored to have Joe's wife, Marion, and his family here with us today. I ask that they please stand and be recognized.

Tonight, I speak to you from The SPACE - a new theatre in the downtown Village of Westbury.

Nassau County, in partnership with Mayor Peter Cavallaro and Legislator Rich Nicoletto worked with Cyrus Hakakian to establish this beautiful new entertainment venue.

From this new theatre, to new housing opportunities and stores, Westbury is an example of reinventing and revitalizing our downtown business districts. It represents how Nassau County insists on managing its future for the betterment of every resident.

Friends, four years ago we gathered together for the purpose of setting forth a plan to address the many problems Nassau County was facing after years of failed policies. Those policies gave us high taxes and a poor economy. It was a recipe for disaster.

I put forth a plan to stop the ever rising real property taxes burdening our residents and reverse the trend of rising unemployment. The foundation of my plan included:

- Freezing Property Taxes;
- Eliminating the Home Energy Tax;
- Reducing the size of government by 20%;
- Launching an aggressive economic development plan that focused on job generation and job retention; and Ensure that county government has the means to protect our quality of life.

As we move forward, my plan builds on these core initiatives. We are successfully creating an environment for economic growth. We are seeing new job opportunities emerge for our residents. We are encouraging programs that ensure our young workforce can reside in Nassau County. And we are vigorously waging war on the devastating heroin epidemic that is plaguing our County, Long Island and the nation.

Friends, together we have worked to eliminate much of the \$378 million dollar deficit we inherited, and moved Nassau County forward in a way that has helped our residents afford the quality of life we have come to expect in our great county.

It is these policies and this mindset that has helped to ensure that Nassau is NO LONGER the highest property taxed county in the nation and Nassau now provides opportunities for all who want to call it home.

Every day, more and more local governments throughout the state are beginning to understand and embrace these simple truths that we have known for the past four years.

That is why politicians from all across New York are contacting us to better understand how we cut taxes while steadily closing a multi-million dollar deficit.

My administration has, and continues to be dedicated to, the task of cutting wasteful spending, developing new and efficient ways of providing services and rightsizing Nassau County's government.

Four years ago, County government was bloated and needed to lose weight. A lot of weight! We put it on a diet by reducing the workforce by 20%. Nassau County government now has 6 less departments thanks to efficient consolidation efforts and 123 fewer administrators.

The devil is in the details. We have cut energy costs, reduced the number of vehicles in our fleet and took on the task of eliminating 2,500 excessive copy machines and 1,700 duplicative phone lines. These innovative, practical and efficient solutions not only saved tax dollars but allowed us to continue important services to our residents.

For example, greater efficiencies were made in our bus system, where a private company now operates Nassau-owned buses - saving taxpayers \$33 million a year and provides ridership with reliable, efficient bus service and more routes - all without raising cash fares.

Efficiencies were also made at the County jail, where Sheriff Michael Sposato produced an annual saving of \$7 million by bringing private health care professionals into the jail to provide health care onsite - thereby eliminating the costly expense of correction officers accompanying convicts to local hospitals and clinics for treatment. Sheriff Sposato, please stand and be recognized.

We are also administering several cost-saving programs in the Department of Public Works, where Commissioner Shila Shah and her team has successfully converted all traffic lights to LED and instituted a state-of-the-art snow plow monitoring system that provides real-time data showing the location and speed of the plow, whether the sander is on or off, and if the plow is in operation on county roads.

We have successfully met every weather challenge - from the ravages of Hurricane Sandy to this year's relentless series of snow storms. The men and women of our Department of Public Works have provided superior service to our residents. Will Commissioner Shila Shah and our snow plow operators please stand and be recognized.

This dedicated workforce is one important reason we are working with NIFA to lift the wage freeze to recognize jobs well done, while achieving long term structural and reoccurring savings.

I would like to recognize our Office of Emergency Management for superior response to Hurricane Sandy. Their efforts under crisis were spectacular. Due to the efforts of our first responders, no lives were lost during that powerful storm. In fact, Nassau County received the prestigious National Weather Service Designation as "Storm Ready." Would the men and women of OEM please stand to be recognized.

These achievements of our workforce continue in the Department of Social Services where Commissioner John Imhof and his team of Fraud investigators have recovered and prevented \$15.3 million in Medicaid fraud while continuing to deliver outstanding social services. John Imhof, please stand and be recognized.

I would like to acknowledge Fire Marshall Scott Tusa for his work in consolidating and establishing a state-of-the-art training and education center at Nassau County's Firefighting training facilities. Scott, please stand and be recognized.

And, Health Commissioner Larry Eisenstein for his leadership in safely evacuating 6 nursing homes and a hospital in the face of Hurricane Sandy and for bringing national honors to our County by winning 3 National Model Practice Awards, the highest number awarded to a local health department in the United States in 2013. His team of nurses and health care professionals is second to none. Larry, please stand and be recognized.

Executive Director Eldia Gonsalves for her exemplary work leading the Coordinating Agency for Spanish Americans. Eldia, please stand and be recognized.

Parks Commissioner, now our County Attorney, Carnell Foskey for expanding athletic and family entertainment options, such as our fabulous FREE summer concert series, Octoberfest, Barkfest, Candlelight Nights, the Long Island Fair at Old Bethpage Village Restoration and our Annual Cruise to the Show Car Show and Parade, to name a few. Nassau County residents are using and enjoying their wonderful parks again...as they should be! Carnell Foskey, please stand and be recognized.

Commissioner Lisa Murphy, for successfully overseeing the merger of 6 departments which resulted in a new Department of Human Services which includes the departments of Mental Health, Chemical Dependency, Developmental Disabilities Services, Senior Citizen Affairs, the Office of the Physically Challenged and the Nassau County Youth Board. Lisa Murphy, please stand and be recognized.

Collectively, my team has reduced wasteful spending, as well as implemented efficiencies and technology which have reinvented County government and saved tax dollars.

In fact, my administration's success in cutting wasteful spending resulted in Nassau County receiving Governor Cuomo's New York State Government Efficiency Award as well as a \$5 million dollar grant.

I also wish to recognize my Economic Development team led by Joe Kearney, who have partnered with me to attract new businesses to our borders, create and retain jobs and create housing opportunities for our young workforce. Will Joe Kearney and his team please stand and be recognized.

With the support of Presiding Officer Norma Gonsalves, we have tackled the decade old dilemma of redeveloping the Hub by launching a 100% privately financed new Veterans Memorial Coliseum and entertainment district. The new Coliseum will retain its history of honoring our veterans while sharing in revenue with County taxpayers, employ 2,700 people and provide \$10 billion in economic benefit to Nassau County and complement Hofstra University and Nassau Community College.

An attractive, first class destination, the Coliseum will include family fun, sports and entertainment, including: Islander games; The Brooklyn Nets; The New York Yankees Coaching Clinics; Heavyweight Boxing; an New American Hockey League Team; and Star-Studded Performers and Family-Fun Entertainment.

The transformed Coliseum is only the beginning! After completion, new developments will take shape including a movie theatre, bowling center and themed restaurants. We should all be excited about our future as this economic development project will enhance our quality of life and provide job opportunities for residents.

No longer will County residents pay the electric bill, pave the parking lot or buy million dollar scoreboards. These practices are not sustainable and are personally unacceptable to this administration.

Instead, County taxpayers will shed costly expenses and share in the revenue generated at the Coliseum. In addition to a new coliseum, other 100% privately financed projects are underway which will result in new Indoor Twin Ice Skating Rinks and a new indoor pool to accommodate National sporting events and will increase tourism while providing youth athletes with state-of-the-art facilities.

Another public private partnership is underway at Old Bethpage Village Restoration, where together with the History Channel and philanthropist Lawrence Kadish, we are establishing the Museum of American Armor.

This facility will not only serve as a living museum and education center, but it will be a vibrant and dynamic tribute to the tens of thousands of U.S. G.I's here in Nassau County who dedicated their lives to protect our nation and the lives of those who have faced tyranny around the world.

The positive financial benefits from public-private partnerships, along with a vibrant, iconic sports and entertainment center, are only part of the success we achieved.

My administration recognizes providing our young workforce job opportunities and attractive entertainment venues that compete with neighboring city boroughs is only part of the solution; a fundamental part of the solution lies in providing housing options; clearly, keeping property taxes down keeps properties affordable but providing affordable rental opportunities is an absolute necessity.

The fact is today's starter home for many young families are actually an affordable apartment.

To assist young professionals and meet employers need for an educated workforce, my administration, with the assistance of Legislator Mike Venditto, has partnered with the private sector to create more than 1,000 new housing opportunities adjacent to transit hubs in Hempstead, Great Neck Plaza, Farmingdale, Mineola and Westbury.

Our program encourages developers to convert empty office buildings to apartments.

To continue this successful program, my administration, with the assistance of Legislator Fran Becker, earmarked Federal funds to study the conversion of empty office space into residences in Baldwin, Lynbrook and Valley Stream. Our housing initiative not only assists young families, it revitalizes downtowns by increasing economic activity and removing eyesores.

To further our goal of curtailing the "Brain Drain," I have launched Nassau 200. This study builds on our current efforts to attract and retain young professionals in Nassau County. In the coming year my administration will launch a panel of 200 Millennial opinion leaders. They will be charged with the mission of reversing the migration of crucial talent off Long Island.

From advising my cabinet, to ratifying select plans and programs, generating new ideas and building new initiatives, this group of residents born between 1979 and 1995, will help us encourage young people to live and work in Nassau County. It is initiatives such as this, along with our anti-property-tax and pro-job growth policies that are designed to have an immediate and profound impact on our future.

An example of our economic successes can be viewed at the former Grumman property in Bethpage and Hicksville. Once a single employer venue dependent on defense contracts, it is now 600 acres of diverse businesses. It includes a state-of-the-art Homeland Security Center, housing opportunities and Nassau's newest industry - film and TV production.

Nassau County has quickly become the Hollywood East of the movie and television industry thanks to the support of Legislators Rich Nicoletto, Rose Walker and Denise Ford. Collectively, this industry generated \$144 million in economic benefits throughout the area and employed nearly 2,000 people. Nassau now has more filming days than four of the five New York City boroughs and regularly employs electricians, carpenters and artisans. Most recently, Carrie Underwood performed a live television broadcast of the Sound of Music on NBC from Grumman Studios. The most expensive motion picture in history - The Amazing Spiderman 2 was recently filmed in Bethpage and will be released in May.

To continue growing jobs, I have been in contact with the New York Institute of Technology, Molloy College, Long Island University and Start Up New York and, together, we seek to attract digital editing post production companies to Nassau. It is initiatives such as these that have strengthened our local economy. Never again will the loss of a single company such as Grumman be allowed to assault Nassau's economy.

After shedding jobs for more than 10 years, good middle-class jobs have begun returning to Nassau. We stand here today with a record that includes creating and retaining nearly 20,000 jobs and employment opportunities. From the new Hain Celestial Headquarters in Lake Success to attracting a New York City lighting company bound for L.A., jobs are coming back to Nassau.

Just recently, we announced that manufacturers - New York Vanity and Supreme Screw - both are moving from New York City to Nassau. Many local companies are also expanding their operations, including employers such as Clever Devices, AriZona Iced Tea, New York Community Bancorp, Nassau Candy, the new beverage manufacturer Agua Enervivá, R Best Produce - parent company of Uncle Guiseppe's and many more.

My aggressive economic development plan does not stop there. Through public-private partnerships, we are making an economic future possible for Nassau that, previously, would have been unimaginable.

Nassau County's economy is clearly growing! Just several weeks ago, the State Department of Labor released statistics indicating a drop in unemployment to 5.1%. These statistics remind us that our economic development and job creation policies are working, as our employment rate is considerably lower when compared statewide and throughout the nation.

To connect employers with residents, my administration has hosted several extremely successful job fairs. In fact, in November, more than 10,000 job seekers visited our free job fair at the Nassau Veterans Memorial Coliseum.

To further assist residents, I, along with the support of Legislator Vincent Muscarella, launched the Nassau County smart phone app named Nassau Works. This app lists tens of thousands of jobs available for our residents - all on your smartphone and at the touch of a screen. Download the app today on your mobile device or visit the service online at NassauWorks.com.

This application builds on our success of our smart application, Nassau Now, which provides an efficient way to receive important emergency alerts as well as to report neighborhood issues such as downed trees, traffic hazards and, yes, pot holes. The application allows you to simply take a photo with your smart phone of the issue and send it to the appropriate department for action.

This application has been very successful and recently was utilized to correct a safety hazard reported by Legislator Judy Jacobs who we worked with to swiftly address the issue. In addition to not raising real property taxes, creating jobs and providing new housing opportunities for our young workforce we have steadily improved Nassau's finances through a renewed and mutually respectful partnership with NIFA.

I want to recognize Jon Kaiman, Chairman of NIFA for creating a cooperative, progressive path to fiscal strength.

Historically, over the past several decades, the County's budgetary fund balance was used to measure its financial operations. When I assumed office in 2010 the County's fund balance was \$64 million. The County's independently audited financial statements for 2012 indicated that the fund balance had increased 28% to \$82 million. This positive trend will continue when the 2013 audited financial statements are released later this year and we believe that the fund balance will grow to over \$100 million.

As agreed to with NIFA, Nassau County is transitioning to reporting on a more stringent accounting basis. In 2012, the County reported a \$27.5 million dollar surplus on a GAAP basis and continues to show improvement with respect to the NIFA statute test, which is even more conservative than the GAAP reporting standard.

This positive financial news is the result of extraordinary cost cutting efforts. The good news in Nassau is that these affirmative actions undertaken by this Administration have firmly placed Nassau on the road to fiscal recovery. However, more work needs to be accomplished to comply with NIFA's new accounting standard which basically eliminates certain revenue items. The single greatest obstacle to meeting this standard is Nassau's assessment system which accounts for nearly one-half of Nassau's \$3 billion dollar debt.

Nassau County is the only county in New York State to guarantee returning money it has never received. I have endeavored to correct this bizarre and destructive rule. Recently, the Court of Appeals has made it clear only New York State legislation can change it.

Accordingly, I have met with State officials, NIFA and Kevin Law of the LIA to craft legislation that will correct this billion dollar wasteful system that places an unconscionable burden on every county taxpayer. As we move forward, I call on all stakeholders to work together to end the present system, end the billion dollar waste and treat Nassau taxpayers as other taxpayers are treated throughout New York State. We ask for nothing more but will insist on nothing less.

Successfully reinventing and revolutionizing Nassau County has been a challenge; however, rebuilding our Great County is an even greater challenge due to the damage inflicted on our residents, property and infrastructure by Hurricane Sandy.

It speaks to the strength of our residents that we have stood against that storm and come back from historic devastation. But it took a team of men and women who ignored partisan labels and displayed extraordinary leadership to help Nassau County at a time of crisis.

Together with Governor Cuomo, Majority Leader Dean Skelos, U.S. Senators Schumer and Gillibrand and Congressmen King and Israel, we have made certain that unaffected property owners don't bear the tax burden of the reduced assessment claims from properties damaged by Hurricane Sandy. As we partnered with these great friends in government, so too we are working with Federal and State agencies to address the continued needs of our residents in a Post-Hurricane Sandy environment.

Many lessons have been learned from Hurricane Sandy; from elevating homes to strengthening critical infrastructure. Much work is left to do and while Hurricane Sandy was a devastating storm, the likes of which we never wish to experience again, it has provided the opportunity to rebuild smarter and stronger.

One example is our Bay Park Waste Water Treatment Plant where we secured, in partnership with Governor Cuomo, Majority Leader Skelos, Senator Schumer and Legislators Denise Ford and Howard Kopel, \$830 million to rebuild an even stronger Bay Park Waste Water Treatment Plant which serves 550,000 residents.

Today, the advocacy for Federal dollars continues as I join forces with Governor Cuomo, Senator Schumer and a dozen environmental groups to obtain the dollars necessary to construct an ocean outfall pipe.

Historically and presently, Bay Park Waste Water Plant discharges directly into Reynolds Channel. I want to move this discharge 2 miles out into the ocean thus protecting our environment and increasing recreational boating and commercial fishing opportunities.

I remain optimistic and committed to fighting for the outfall pipe for Nassau County residents. A stronger, smarter and more resilient Nassau County is in our future and will soon be a reality.

Nassau County is the safest large suburban county in the nation and I am happy to report that statistics tell us it is even safer. Police Commissioner Krumpter and the Nassau County Police Department have reduced crime by 14% year-to-date. Crime is down by over 11% since this Administration took office in 2010.

Nassau's intelligence-led policing is a model other police departments from across the nation are studying as it combines good old fashion police work with state-of-the-art technology and best practices.

From a zero-tolerance for domestic violence to our ground breaking Active Shooter seminars, N.C.P.D. is making certain our educational institutions, places of public assembly and neighborhoods are safe and will remain so.

With support from Legislators Laura Schaeffer and Donald MacKenzie, this year every school will be eligible to receive two-way communication devices which when activated, immediately connects with our Nine-One-One Center, provides GPS coordinates and records all audio. This is just one example of our proactive public safety policies.

In addition, working with District Attorney, Kathleen Rice, our Nassau Gun buyback program took 3,000 illegal guns off the streets. Thanks and gratitude is offered to our dedicated Nassau County Police force who keep our residents and neighborhoods safe.

In addition, we have stepped up our war on heroin. This epidemic is claiming the lives of over 120 residents a year and causing 820 overdoses annually. Far too many lives are lost and families heart-broken due to this scourge on our society.

In addition to aggressive education, awareness and enforcement campaigns, Nassau is the first county in New York State to train citizens to administer the life-saving overdose prevention drug, Narcan. I want to thank Eden Laiken, my wife Linda and all those dedicated to this "second chance on life" program.

I would like to also recognize the many students who joined our efforts to prevent heroin use by creating Public Service Announcements for their peers. MacArthur, Valley Stream South, Division and Hewlett High School Students, please stand and be recognized.

To keep our county secure and maintain an educated public safety workforce, we plan to hire approximately 125 police officers a year for the next three years. These officers will replace retiring officers and continue our tradition of safe neighborhoods.

With the support of Former Legislator Joseph Scannell and now, Legislator Laura Curran, we have begun construction of a new state-of-the-art First Precinct to replace the dilapidated facility in Baldwin.

Friends, there is so much more!

We have improved our parks through smart cost-saving partnerships that provide free entertainment for our residents, affordable camps for our children and have continued the Games for the Physically Challenged by raising the necessary funds from local residents and good corporate citizens.

We have honored our veterans and continue to deliver important health and human services to all our residents.

We have enhanced the lives of so many of our senior citizens with county programs such as senior birthday celebrations that pay tribute to those who helped build this Great County.

We have certified the highest number of women-owned and minority-owned businesses while also helping a record number of new Americans obtain citizenship.

We have launched successful public-private partnerships that save taxpayer dollars and we have and continue to crack down on welfare fraud.

And, so many in this room have worked to implement these programs and they deserve to be recognized and publicly thanked...

Nassau County no longer taxes too high, spends too much or reforms too little.

We have met each challenge WITHOUT raising County property taxes and that will be our goal for the future while creating more well-paying, private sector jobs.

As Ben Franklin once said "By failing to prepare, you are preparing to fail."

Here in Nassau, we will not accept failure. The cost is too high, the price too dear.

The next four years are already full of challenges and opportunities that promise to make Nassau County an even better place to live, work and raise a family!

From breaking ground on a world class Veterans Memorial Coliseum and entertainment district, to planning a job generating phase-three for the Hub.

From new opportunities at Belmont Park, to the expansion of the Film and TV Industry, much job growth is on the horizon.

From renovating the shuttered social services building into a state-of-the-art family court, to building a new crime lab; there is much to accomplish.

From making certain every Sandy victim is back in their home, to rebuilding our waste water treatment plant, there is much opportunity to rebuild stronger and smarter.

And our wish list of building an ocean outfall pipe to protect our bay, recreational boating and commercial fishing remains an opportunity we must seize.

From planning emergency worker dorms, to building a state-of-the-art public safety training center, there is much planning to be done.

From increasing housing options for our youth, to strengthening our public transit system, there

is much work to accomplish.

While there are always critics on the road to reform, I am reminded of the words of Abraham Lincoln "He has a right to criticize who has the heart to help."

So let us leave here tonight committed to work across party lines to honor the people of Nassau County. This is not about partisanship but leadership.

We have accomplished much and can truly accomplish much more through cooperation and mutual respect.

Together, we can and will meet every challenge and continue to make Nassau County an even better place to live, work and raise a family.

Before I conclude, I would especially like to thank my wife Linda, sons Sal and Al and my parents for their love and support.

Friends, the future is bright and we here in Nassau County have so much to look forward to!

Thank you all!

May God bless you, and may He watch over these United States of America.

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