



THE THEODORE ROOSEVELT EXECUTIVE & LEGISLATIVE BUILDING
OFFICE OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE
1550 FRANKLIN AVENUE
MINEOLA, NY 11501

September 15, 2009

Dear Citizens of Nassau County:

I am proud to announce that my proposed 2010 County budget freezes County property taxes. There will be no increase in County taxes next year and the County portion of your total property tax bill will represent only 16.9% of the overall property tax bill. That's down from 22.7% the day I took office in January 2002.

I know property taxes are too high; especially school taxes, which account for approximately 65% of your total bill. In these tough times, we can't afford to pay more taxes, so I've held the line on county taxes in the newest county budget. And that is also why I have been fighting Albany from spending our money and pushing the costs down to schools, counties and local governments.

This new budget keeps spending increases at a record low of 0.5% and improves the budget's important structural balance, with 10% fewer county employees.

It's remarkable that we have been able to keep the spending increase at only 0.5% (that's one-half of one percent) in spite of the fact that Albany has continued to increase county spending by millions of dollars every year through mandates and we have continuously reduced the number of workers in our government.

That 0.5% spending increase is far below the Consumer Price Index. This minimal increase in spending has been accomplished despite the increase of \$38 million in contractual raises for union employees, \$19 million in increased State and federally mandated social services, \$7 million in increases of State mandated Workers' Compensation costs, \$7 million in increased health insurance costs, and \$5 million in increased State mandated Special Education and Early Intervention costs. These costs, if unabated, would have represented a 9.3% County property tax increase.

We have accomplished all this by cutting the County workforce to the smallest level in 30 years and we will cut it even more. In this year's budget, we show a reduction of more than 700 positions. The County's "headcount," the number of people working in County government, is now 1,000 employees lower than when I first took office.

As a result, we have reorganized, restructured and reengineered County government. We continue to make Nassau County government more efficient to do the work necessary to serve the public with less staff. We have no choice.

We have consolidated a dozen government departments, eliminating duplicative services, but still remain able to respond to the real needs of people and to those people most in need. Most recently, all information technology staff throughout the County were consolidated into the Department of Information Technology. Fleet maintenance, building maintenance, and park maintenance staff were merged into the Department of Public Works and printing and graphics personnel into Constituent Affairs. This means we have improved coordination, reduced required equipment, streamlined staffing requirements, and defined professional staff development.

We have civilianized many positions in our Police Department but still are able to keep Nassau County's crime rates at the lowest rate of any municipality of our size in the whole country.

It was exactly a year ago this week, when the bottom fell out of the national economy. The stock market dropped over 30%, consumer confidence fell to the lowest level in history, banks failed and the loss of sales tax revenues blew a \$130 million-hole in our budget.

This past year has been the most difficult. But, with the boost of some federal stimulus money, negotiated labor concessions from all our County unions and some additional revenues from State legislative items, we have been able to once again, balance our budget.

We have worked through the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression and still managed to keep our financial bond ratings at the highest level in decades, earning 13 bond upgrades since I took office. While municipalities around the nation were being downgraded and placed on "negative watch," Nassau County's ratings were affirmed as "stable."

Despite the drastic loss of sales tax revenue and 1,000 employees, and despite the increase in mandated services, and the growing number of residents applying for Medicaid and public assistance programs, we have managed to maintain services to residents without raising overtime expenses. While we have managed to turn the county around from being "the worst-run county in the nation," and we have managed to keep the county portion of the property tax bill under control, there is still a major problem with taxes on Long Island. We kept our promise to fix county government after decades of management neglect, and will continue to control costs so that Nassau taxpayers don't bear the increased burden of mandated services. After cutting to the bone, there is no easy way to do it anymore, but we're not going to give up.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Thomas R. Suozzi". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Thomas R. Suozzi
Nassau County Executive