



Westchester
County Association

CONTACT: Dorothy Forcina
The Westchester County Association, Inc.
(914) 948-5689
dforcina@westchester.org

For Immediate Release

**BUSINESS GROUP PRESIDENT TO COUNTY
LEGISLATORS: ZERO INCREASE IN TAX LEVY**

**With High Property Taxes Seriously Impacting County's
Economic Vitality, Calls on Legislators to Fulfill Their
Fiscal Oversight Mission**

White Plains, NY (December 10, 2009) --- Citing the impact of high property taxes on Westchester's economic vitality, William Mooney, President of The Westchester County Association (WCA)—the area's preeminent business advocacy group— today called for no increase in the tax levy and urged county legislators to come up with a budget that responds to the needs of the taxpayers.

These were among a number of recommendations he offered at the final legislative hearing on the 2010 county budget. The \$1.8 billion budget includes a proposed 5% tax increase.

Attached is the full transcript of Mr. Mooney's testimony. The following are highlights:

- There should be no tax increase in the 2010 county budget

- The county government needs to follow the example of businesses and households to adjust expenditures in response to lower revenues/income
- There needs to be more transparency and timely process to review the budget. Two weeks is not enough time to review 700 pages of statistical information
- There should be a fiscal oversight function that has responsibility of reporting directly to the legislators. This would not be not be an incremental position but a reallocation of resources.
- The county should institute multi-year forecasting and exercise greater internal control function
- The cost of compensation of county union employees must be addressed and is too often omitted in the discussion about how to cut the budget
- Contributions to county employee pensions must be reviewed (Note: NY State Controller Tom DiNapoli recently predicted that local governments outside New York City will be forced to triple their contributions to public pensions over the next six years)
- County union employees should be required to contribute at least 10% to their health plans
- More efficient ways should be explored to deliver social services and fringe benefits which account for \$500 million and \$200 million, respectively, in the budget
- Legislators must develop a proactive economic development strategy to attract and retain business

The Westchester County Association is the preeminent business membership organization in Westchester County. The Association is committed to business advocacy, economic vitality and to providing a strong and clear voice for the interests of businesses on the regional, national and international levels. Its key objectives are: promoting positive economic development in the region; fostering business development; and providing its members with access and interaction with key public and private sector individuals, agencies and organizations.