

**Astorino: Tax Cuts, Biz/Jobs Priorities. Medicaid to Soar. Schumer:He's Wrong.**  
January, 3 2010

**WPCNR County Clarion-Ledger. By John F. Bailey. January 3, 2010:** Over 1,300 persons, according to the Astorino administration news release attended the Inauguration of Hawthorne's 42-year old Rob Astorino as 8<sup>th</sup> County Executive of Westchester County Sunday at SUNY Performing Arts Center in Purchase. With Mr. Astorino marching in preceded by the bagpipes of the Westchester County Police Ceremonial Unit and Police Emerald Society of Westchester County, a delighted, invitation-only crowd of dignitaries and friends ranging from Janet DiFiore to John Spencer burst into loud applause on numerous occasions through Mr Astorino's 20-minute Keynote address.



Astorino, promised to examine expenses and cut taxes, and eliminate the "nice to have" programs and keep only the "must haves" made the provocative statement "Westchester's Medicaid costs are likely to skyrocket, under Washington's proposed health reform legislation," and he vowed, "In the days and weeks ahead, my inter-governmental relations team will be in contact with Westchester's Congressional delegation and our state Legislators to do everything possible to keep additional costs from getting dumped on the backs of Westchester taxpayers." (This brought loud applause.)

A short time later at City Hall in White Plains, Senator Charles Schumer, principal architect and point man for the Obama Administration in developing the Senate Health Care Reform bill, was asked by WPCNR as Schumer was leaving city hall in White Plains at Adam Bradley's "People's Inauguration" if he (Schumer) knew what Mr.Astorino was referring to when Astorino said Medicaid costs would soar.

Schumer, walking to the City Hall parking lot, told WPCNR, "No, he's wrong. In fact, there's legislation in the (Health Reform) bill that brings more money to Westchester (for Medicaid)."

Astorino promised “Essential Services, Economic Growth and Tax Relief,” which he said his administration would achieve through “competence, collaboration (with politicians and community in a bipartisan manner) and communication (of the facts to the public).”

County Executive Astorino said he would “mobilize the county’s best and brightest business leaders” to “jump start” job creation and promised to make Westchester more friendly to businesses to prevent a future losses of major businesses such as Starwood Hotels which recently announced their flight to Stamford.

It should be noted the Westchester County Association promised just such a coalition and effort last year, but as yet has failed to deliver specific programs developed by the coalition they had formed.

Here is the complete text of Mr. Astorino’s address:

*Thank you for being here today. I am honored and excited to stand before you as Westchester's eighth County Executive. In thinking about today, I have to admit that I was more than a little bit overwhelmed at first. One of the realities of being the County Executive is that everything is magnified. Whatever problems and issues you had before, multiply them by 10. Whatever advice you had received before - good and bad - multiply by 20. Whatever, close, personal, lifelong friends you had, multiply by the biggest number you can think of .... and double it. Of course, once this speech is over, I am told I can start subtracting some of those friends. In other words, I stand before you today at the height of my popularity.*

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*I ran for County Executive because I love Westchester. I grew up here. My first real job was working in sales and hosting a sports talk show on WFAS Radio in Hartsdale. One day before my show, I went to Pete's Saloon in Elmsford to get a bite to eat. And by luck - or fate - the most gorgeous waitress comes to my table. Black hair, blue eyes, and studying for her Masters degree in Special Education. She asked me "What'll you have?" 10 years later, we have three children and a mortgage together! Sheila and I decided right away to raise Sean, Kiley, and Ashlin here in Westchester. There's no place else in the world we'd rather live. Our dreams are the dreams of every Westchester family. We want our children to grow up in a safe and caring environment. In a community where people look out for each other....where you pick up your neighbor's paper when they're away, and lend a hand shoveling when it snows. That's the Westchester I know Westchester is home to extraordinary people, communities, schools, and natural beauty. We have it all. But it's becoming tough to get by here. For too many, thriving has been replaced by barely surviving. Income is down. Bills are up. And taxes just keep coming and coming. These are things I spoke about on the campaign trail. And I spoke about them because I was hearing them from you, my neighbors. We've all been asking the same question. How can living in Westchester have become so expensive? For too long the question went unanswered. No one in government seemed to hear. Well I hear you. I hear you loud and clear. Now, the campaign is over. The voters have spoken, and they want change. They know the problems are real - and growing. They know they won't go away tomorrow. But they won't accept lip service anymore. Neither will I.. It is time to govern.*

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*I began my career at the age of 15 as a sports reporter on public access television. One thing I learned quickly was the importance of giving people the facts: So in the next few minutes, I am going to take you through the who, what, when, where, why and how of our administration, and its governing philosophy for the next four years. First, let me start by thanking Andy Spano for making this a smooth transition...and for his many years of service to our county. I'd also like to acknowledge two other former county executive's in attendance today: Andy O'Rourke and Al DelBello. Also here with us today are Senator Schumer, Congresswoman Lowey, many members of our State and County Legislatures, as well as numerous local representatives. I also need to acknowledge the many campaign volunteers and supporters, whose incredible dedication made both our election and today's wonderful inaugural celebration possible. Special thanks to all of you. Finally, let me ask my deputy county executive - Kevin Plunkett to stand up. At 6 foot 5, obviously I needed a power forward for our 9<sup>th</sup> floor basketball team.*

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*So question Number One: Who are we? -The Astorino administration is just a group of ordinary citizens. We are people who live on your street, shop in your grocery stores, root for your high school teams. We are from all walks of life, political persuasions and ethnic backgrounds. We see our job in very simple terms: Act as temporary stewards of the public trust - your trust - for the purpose of making Westchester a better place to live and work. We don't have all the answers. But we believe we know the right questions to ask. We know them all too well because They get asked every day, around every kitchen table in Westchester: What do we really need? And, how will we pay for it? These are not grandiose transformational ideas. But they do go to the core of how we all live our lives. My philosophy is that if they are good enough for our families, then, they are more than good enough for our government. So what do we need to focus on? We have to have the discipline to focus on the things that matter most. For my administration, that means three things: Essential services, economic growth and tax relief.*

*Essential Services. The first job here will be to decide: What are the essential services that Westchester County government must deliver? The economic reality is that we can no longer afford to pay for programs that are just "nice to haves." Our budget department and external auditors are forecasting that Westchester County could face severe cash flow problems as early as spring . . . and a 60 million dollar deficit in 2011. So much for a honeymoon. The way we will face this challenge is head-on. An immediate priority for my commissioners and department heads will be to question every line of spending...like never before; strip out the "nice to haves," and come back to me with budgets that limit spending to "must have" essential services.*

*Economic Growth: The engine that keeps Westchester the place we love is economic growth. To put it bluntly, business and commerce are what pay the bills. Therefore, it is absolutely critical that County government do everything in its power to make Westchester an attractive place for new businesses to locate and for our current businesses to stay and prosper. We cannot afford to see anymore companies like Starwood Hotels leave Westchester for Connecticut or anywhere else. But let's be clear. Large corporations are not the only contributor to Westchester's economy. Small businesses are the number one source of jobs and job creation. So companies large and small*

*- from IBM, Pepsico and MasterCard to*