

## A call to action – is anybody listening?

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Jun-04-10

Topics: [Environment](#), [Government](#)

When a thousand people gather with a single purpose in mind, it is time to pay attention. The Westchester County Association's rally at the RyeTown Hilton, designed to wake up Albany and the electorate, was nothing if not energizing. Notable was the singing of the national anthem by the entire assemblage, a rare occurrence these days when it is more likely delegated to an inadequate soloist. (Can you imagine the national anthem of other countries being sung by a soloist? Unthinkable!) This is indeed a time to pull together if New York state is to avoid insolvency. The keynote speaker, former New York City Mayor Ed Koch, a man who has been there, done that, gave a sense of history to the current struggles. Now 85 years old Mr. Koch still speaks truth to power.

But to really understand the gravity of the perilous state we are in, one must read the "Call to Action" summary of vital information on the WCA website – [www.CalltoActionCampaign.org](http://www.CalltoActionCampaign.org). In graphic detail the current and future financial time bombs are laid out. One of the more astonishing facts is the extraordinary number of taxing entities in this state as compared with other states. There are approximately 12,000 taxing entities of various kinds in NYS vs. an average of 200 in other states. And we are wondering why we are so heavily taxed? It is a no-brainer. People used to flock to this state because of the high level of benefits available. Now they are flocking out because the exponential rise in the cost of those benefits is overwhelming.

Here is the task ahead in a nutshell. The November election simply must oust any incumbent who has not been doing a statesmanlike job. That means that a new legislator must be actively involved in legislation that keeps the state solvent, rather than distracted by the necessity of assuring re-election. We could make this happen if we stop funding irresponsible politicians. This is hardly rocket science, friends. Lobbyists and corporate entities tend to fund both sides of any election presumably to assure that they will have a friend in Albany. This gives no direction to any person seeking public office.

Politicians do not really know what people want because of the contradictory rhetoric that clogs the media. The fact that only about 35 percent of the electorate even bothers to vote, is a sad

commentary on a country that makes a lot of noise about freedom but somehow can't make it to the polls.

We must demand certain commitments on the part of anyone running for office, as Koch stated, particularly that he or she will back the establishment of a nonpartisan commission to redistrict the state so it reflects the actual population and not just the incumbents' reliable base. Some districts, notably in Southern Westchester and the Bronx look like Rorschach tests – an ink blob run amok. Redistricting is required after every census, but this one must represent a fresh start on the political map. Only a nonpartisan commission can make that happen.

Finally, the mission of the next state Legislature is to shrink state government and put pressure on local municipalities to do the same. In the interest of state solvency this mission will require all existing union contracts, legal agreements made by the 800 public authorities (the cause of a significant portion of state debt and one with no public oversight) and other commitments, to be reopened and renegotiated.

One can only imagine the uproar if such a move transpires, but has anyone got a better idea to stop the hemorrhaging of state funds? To this point there has only been tinkering around the edges and there is plenty of resistance to doing that much. Failing this kind of total overhaul the state will just plain run out of money (that's called bankruptcy), and, according to Gov. David Paterson, that day is not far off. What will be the solution then? How did this seemingly all-powerful Empire State come to such a pass?