



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

John J. Flanagan

## Senator Flanagan Joins Attorney General Cuomo to Unveil Government Consolidation Legislation

JOHN J. FLANAGAN May 21, 2009



Senator John Flanagan (2<sup>nd</sup> Senate District) joined Attorney General Andrew M. Cuomo in Melville today to unveil landmark legislation, entitled the “New N.Y. Government Reorganization and Citizen Empowerment Act,” which will give communities across the state the power to reform local governments. The meeting was hosted by the Long Island Association at their Melville headquarters and is part of Attorney General Cuomo’s effort to build bipartisan support for the legislation.

As the current fiscal climate continues to financially squeeze communities and residents across the state, Attorney General Cuomo’s proposal is designed to cut government waste, reduce taxes, and provide vital services in a more efficient manner. Currently, the state’s overlapping governments force New York State residents to endure the nation’s highest local taxes and this comprehensive legislative plan will streamline the cumbersome process of consolidating these governmental entities.

“We have the historic opportunity to pass legislation that will empower citizens, streamline New York’s antiquated local government system, and reduce the tremendous tax burden that New Yorkers deal with every day,” said Attorney General Cuomo. “Over the last several months I have been traveling the state to build public support and to reach out to local leaders regarding this government consolidation proposal. Today’s show of bipartisan support for the plan is further testament to the fact that in these tough economic times we need to implement reform and save taxpayer dollars. I look forward to continuing to work with both sides of the aisle to usher this bill into law.”

“From the MTA payroll tax to the loss of STAR rebate checks, New York State residents are constantly being asked to shoulder a greater tax burden but they are rarely provided with the ability to decide how their hard-earned money is utilized. This legislation will provide them with that power and allow them to work together to change their government,” stated Senator Flanagan. “That will give all New Yorkers with the real local control they deserve and I applaud Attorney General Cuomo for his efforts.”

In all, there are more than 10,500 governmental entities imposing taxes and fees across New York State. This includes towns, villages, districts, and special districts such as water, sewer, and lighting districts.

The proposal will not mandate consolidation but will instead restructure the state law to allow citizens, local officials, and counties to make the decisions themselves.

Senator Flanagan was joined by a number of elected officials in praising Attorney General Cuomo’s legislation.

Assemblymember Michael Fitzpatrick (7<sup>th</sup> Assembly District) said, “Consolidating antiquated and inefficient layers of government will benefit all New Yorkers. I applaud Attorney General Cuomo for developing this proposal and bringing this bill and will fight vigorously to make sure it gets enacted into law.”

“Attorney General Cuomo’s bill is just what New Yorkers need right now to make government more efficient and to cut unnecessary taxes,” stated Assemblymember Bob Sweeney (11<sup>th</sup> Assembly District). “I support this bill and look forward to working with the Attorney General to ensure its swift passage.”

“New Yorkers deserve a government that responds to their calls for reform. Attorney General Cuomo’s bill empowers citizens of New York to bring about the change they need in their government. Working together in a bipartisan fashion, we can help save taxpayer dollars,” added Assemblymember Phil Boyle (8<sup>th</sup> Assembly District).

Suffolk County Executive Steve Levy said, “I am happy to work with Attorney General Cuomo towards consolidating special districts. In a similar vein, over the last few years in Suffolk, I have worked with

municipalities and school districts towards consolidating functions and sharing common services to also save taxpayer dollars.”

Senator Kenneth P. LaValle (1<sup>st</sup> Senate District) said, “Long Island homeowners are struggling to pay their property taxes and are looking for tax savings that make sense. Attorney General Cuomo’s proposal would provide consolidation options that some communities may be interested in considering to bring about significant relief.”

The host Long Island Association’s President Matthew T. Crosson praised the legislation on behalf of the organization’s members: “Long Island has over 900 taxing jurisdictions, more than 700 of them special districts. Their cost adds to the Island’s property tax burden, which is among the highest in the nation. The LIA agrees with Attorney General Cuomo that the voters should be empowered to decide whether to keep special districts as they currently exist or consolidate them to reduce taxes. We look forward to continuing to work with the Attorney General to make this important reform in the region’s and the state’s governmental structure.”

Association for a Better Long Island Executive Director Desmond Ryan said, “With over 10,000 layers of government in New York State, the tax burden that rests on New Yorkers can stifle growth and limit business development. By streamlining government, we can help citizens and the businesses in Long Island and throughout the state. The Association for a Better Long Island supports Attorney General Cuomo’s legislation and urges its passage.”

For more information about Attorney General Cuomo’s proposal and to view an interactive map detailing special districts in New York State by county, residents can visit [www.oag.state.ny.us](http://www.oag.state.ny.us).