



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

John J. Flanagan

Senator Flanagan Announces Attorney General's Effort To Streamline Government Is Signed Into Law

JOHN J. FLANAGAN June 30, 2009

In a move that will provide the residents of his district with a real say in how their tax dollars are utilized, Senator John Flanagan (2nd Senate District) announced that Attorney General Andrew M. Cuomo's "New N.Y. Government Reorganization and Citizen Empowerment Act" was signed into law. This new law, which Senator Flanagan voted for in the New York State Senate, provides communities across the state with the power to consolidate special districts and reform local governments.

As the current fiscal climate continues to financially squeeze communities and residents across the state, the legislation that Senator Flanagan supported and which is now law is designed to cut government waste, reduce taxes, and provide vital services in a more efficient manner.

"I applaud the Legislature for taking action on such a critical issue and giving local communities the ability to reduce government overhead and cut property taxes. In particular, I want to thank Sen. John Flanagan for his leadership on the issue and for working with me on smart policy to improve the lives of all Long Island families," said Attorney General Cuomo.

"New York State residents are constantly being asked to shoulder a greater tax burden but they lack the clear ability to decide how their hard-earned money is spent. The Attorney General has toured our state getting input on this proposal and I applaud him for his efforts to give residents of our state the local control they deserve," stated Senator Flanagan.

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.

In all, there are over 10,500 governmental entities imposing taxes and fees across New York State. According to a recent editorial in Newsday, 340 of these entities are on Long Island.

Under the legislation that Attorney General Cuomo put forth and Senator Flanagan supported, the consolidation process can be started by a county, a local government or by a taxpayer petition drive. In order to streamline this process, the new law establishes a single, comprehensive procedure. Prior to this new law, this process was governed by a confusing variety of provisions.

According to the Attorney General's office, for the resident-driven process, they must submit a petition with a specific number of signatures. The signatures of 10% or 5,000, whichever is less, of the community members are needed to place a consolidation and dissolution proposal on the ballot. For smaller entities with less than 500 members, the signatures of at least 20% of residents would be required.

The consolidation procedure in the new law applies to towns, villages and districts, including special districts and improvement districts.

Any consolidation or dissolution process would have to include the development of a plan and public hearings to maximize civic participation, as well as a referendum on the question of consolidation or dissolution in certain cases.

Senator Flanagan noted that the proposal will not require any special district or community to consolidate: "In this legislation, the power is placed in the hands of the people where it should be. If the community decides together that they like the services they receive, then they have the ability to leave everything in its current form. But if the taxpayers of a community decide they want to make changes, this plan provides them with a clear mechanism to make those changes," added Senator Flanagan.

For more information about the legislation and to view an interactive map detailing special districts in New York State by county, residents can visit

http://www.oag.state.ny.us/bureaus/legislative/government_consolidation/about.html.