

THE
ASSOCIATION OF TOWNS
OF THE
STATE OF NEW YORK

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Dear Local Government Official:

On January 10, 2017, Governor Cuomo continued his assault on local governments by blaming us for New York's high property taxes and proposed yet another unfunded state mandate requiring counties to develop new, voter-approved efficiency plans. His proposal completely misses the mark, undermines representative government and mischaracterizes our role in property taxes.

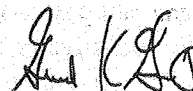
This proposal will not result in meaningful property tax relief because it fails to address the real drivers of high property taxes: school districts, unfunded state mandates and cuts in aid to municipalities. We have done our part to control property taxes and are done serving as the Governor's scapegoat for high property taxes in this state. We are expected to and have done more with less - providing state-mandated services to our residents while complying with decreased state aid and the tax cap - and to state that we rarely work together to share services is insulting, disingenuous and just plain wrong. In fact, over the past three years, local government efficiencies and shared services saved taxpayers roughly \$17 billion, and our well-documented history of sharing services goes back decades.

Government efficiency plans, an element of the tax freeze program requiring a three-year shared services plan from 2017-2019, have just gone into effect. You know as well as we do that towns are already streamlined and efficient. Local governments are not the problem. Until the actual cost drivers are addressed, property taxes in this state will remain among the highest in the nation. If the governor wants *real* tax relief for our residents, proposing another unfunded mandate is not the answer.

According to Governor Cuomo, local governments "would rather keep to themselves." We know that this is false, and we have already saved billions of dollars by working together. Let's stand together to protect local democracy. Our Annual Meeting & Training School is February 19-22; this year more than ever, your attendance is imperative so that we can rally together and show that we will not accept this most recent affront to local governments. Join us there and spread the definitive message: Towns Stand Together. We will offer petitions to sign, chances to connect with your neighbors and colleagues across the state and sessions directly addressing this issue. Your presence is vital in getting this message out; early-bird registration rates are available until January 27.

Now more than ever, we must come together to protect local governments. Join us in this opportunity to remind the state Legislature and Governor the importance and value of local government and home rule. Please lend your voice and support to help us deliver a clear and unified message to Albany. See you in February.

Sincerely,



Gerry Geist, Executive Director