

Call to Action!!! Oppose Governors Proposed Consolidation Plan

Dear NYSTCA Member:

As most of you know, Governor Cuomo has proposed a very troublesome local government consolidation initiative in his FY 2017-18 Executive Budget. NYSTCA and the NY Association of Towns oppose this proposal and *we are asking you to engage your state legislators IMMEDIATELY to oppose this troublesome legislation* currently under deliberation in Albany.

It is our understanding this troublesome proposal is of the highest priority to the Governor as he and legislative leaders work to hammer out an on-time budget deal on or before the end of the state's fiscal year, **March 31, 2017**.

As we have witnessed already, the Commission on Local Government Modernization which "since January of 2014 has shepherded a process to develop a roadmap for more efficient and effective governance in the Syracuse-Onondaga community," *has targeted Town Clerks* as well.~ This is only the beginning of the struggle as this controversy will continue to rear its ugly head until the residents of our communities understand the true nature of this conflict and state legislators vote to protect these residents.

It is our sincere hope that each town clerk throughout New York State will stand united to protect our rights and standing as elected officials and join with local governments as a whole to protect home rule.~ Who knows better how to serve our residents than us!~

IMMEDIATE CALL TO ACTION: We ask all NYSTCA members to individually voice your concerns with your local Senate and Assembly members representing you in Albany. We recommend two immediate courses of action:

1 – **Letter of Opposition** –Please send individual letters of opposition to your local Senator and Assemblymember. We know that you are the best judge of engaging your local elected officials: however, we have attached a boiler plate opposition letter designed to assist you in crafting your letter in opposition. Also, here are links to Association of Towns opposition memorandum:

<https://www.nytowns.org/sites/default/files/01112017.pdf>

<https://www.nytowns.org/sites/default/files/02012017.pdf>

2 – Call your State Senate and Assemblymember - In addition to sending an opposition letter, we are requesting that you call your Senator and Assemblymember to personally voice your concerns. Should you need information about who your state legislative representatives are and their contact information, that information can be found [HERE](#). This map tool will provide you with a link to your individual Senate and Assembly members' website's where you can then locate their mailing address.

Also attached are talking points to use when reaching out to your Senate and Assembly members.

Thank you for your assistance with this important matter.

Talking Points

- 1) Identify yourself, your Town, number of mutual constituents.
- 2) Town Clerks are the direct interface to your (Senate/Assemblymember) town constituents; we provide vital services and direct constituents to town, and often county and state resources to address their needs and concerns.
- 3) The Governor's plan to have County governments establish "shared" services is fundamentally flawed: *it excludes any formal role or decision making of Town, Village or City governments in crafting shared service plans.*
- 4) The Governor offers no financial assistance to establish and implement shared service plans.
- 5) By many accounts the Governor's proposal is a veiled attempt to eliminate local governments and justifies his proposal by blaming the towns for increases in property taxes. This logic fails to address school taxes, unfounded state mandates, and cuts in aid to municipalities. Most jurisdictions have done their part; we have complied with the tax cap, all while receiving decreased state aid.
- 6) The Governor's proposal undermines local representative democracy.
- 7) It essentially disenfranchises the voter from the level of government that is closest and most responsive to them. In many cases, if constituents had to travel to the county seat to interface with government, they would be forced to travel much longer distances.
- 8) Again we urge you to think of your town constituents who, if this proposal is adopted, may have to rely on state or county officials with little or no understanding of your constituents' direct needs from government. Imagine the resulting frustration level of your constituents should this happen.

Sample Letter of Opposition

Dear Senator/Assemblymember _____:

As the duly (elected/appointed) Town Clerk of _____ located in your district, I seek your support in opposing the Governor's proposal to require counties to develop new, voter-approved efficiency plans (Executive Budget – Public Protection and General Government Article VII Legislation, Part U). The Governor's plan to have county governments establish "shared" services plans is fundamentally flawed as it prohibits any role of Town, Village or City governments in crafting such plans. The proposal is inherently unfair, non-collaborative and, thus, undemocratic.

Blaming Town governments for New York's property tax burden ignores the fact that Towns must adhere to the Property Tax Cap law as well as implement unfunded State mandates that have long exacerbated the property tax burden on our mutual constituents. Moreover, State aid to municipalities funding (AIM funding) has been flat at \$715M since 2009, while state school aid has continually increased every year.

While various efficiencies and cost savings may be realized by deploying common back-office functions supported by standard procedures and computer support, shifting the direct delivery of Town services to the State or county would ignore the basic concept of local representative democracy and force our Town residents to travel miles to fulfill their basic government needs. This proposal ignores the needs of our local elderly population, the disabled and those without viable transportation, just to name a few, who would be forced to travel (likely at taxpayer expense) to the State or county seat for ordinary government services. This proposal would severely marginalize the ability of our mutual constituency of (INSERT NUMBER OF TOWN RESIDENTS) residents to connect to government at its most basic and functional level.

As the Town Clerk of Town of (____) I serve as a direct interface between the government and the people we represent and I urge you to reject this proposal and, instead, stand up to protect local representative democracy, home rule and safeguard the rights of our mutual constituency.

Sincerely,