



ASSOCIATION OF TOWNS OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

AOT Responds to Governor's Continued Unwarranted Assault on Local Governments

ALBANY, NY – Sept. 25, 2017 – Speaking today to the New York State Business Council, Gov. Andrew Cuomo said that local governments don't like to share services. The reality is that working with neighbors is a way of life for local government officials – whether we're working together to protect a community resource, helping a neighboring town provide services after a flood or fire, or reducing property taxes through joint initiatives.

The governor also noted that “no one had thought about [shared services]” as a way to reduce property taxes. As someone who served on a town board for more than two decades, and as the executive director of the Association of Towns of the State of New York, I know firsthand that local government officials rely on shared services to lower property taxes and provide quality services. It's not just an option; sharing services is often a priority.

The data demonstrates my point. Over the last 20 years, towns alone have taken in more than \$2.9 billion in revenue from shared services. Annually, towns earn more money from shared services than we receive in unrestricted state aid – 140 percent more, in fact. Local governments have proven to be better partners to each other than the state has been to local governments.

It is, quite simply, in our best interest to find ways to share services since every dollar saved is a dollar that does not need to be raised through property taxes. In fact, more than 1,300 local governments are currently implementing efficiency plans to save more than \$522 million this year and nearly \$1.6 billion by 2020.

By telling taxpayers that local governments don't share services, the governor is engaging in purposeful polarization. The issue of high property taxes in New York State is not due to a lack of sharing services. Local governments have been sharing services from the beginning. We welcome a dialogue with the governor to discuss the facts about shared services, how to address the real reasons for high property taxes and how the state can be a better partner with local governments.

Gerry Geist
Executive Director