

# NEWS RELEASE

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## SUFFOLK LEGISLATURE PASSES 2010 OPERATING BUDGET WITH FOCUS ON PUBLIC SAFETY

- *Funds 200 new Police Officers, 80 new Correction Officers, 11 new Deputy Sheriffs*
- *Funds additional staff critical to criminal investigations for the DA*
- *Adds \$50,000 for the Fireman's Training Center to train Volunteer Firefighters*
- *Restores funding to keep the Central Islip Health Center open in 2010*
- *Cuts spending by \$6 million overall,*
- *Lowers overly optimistic sales tax revenue projections*
- *All while Maintaining the 5<sup>th</sup> Consecutive General Fund Property Tax Freeze with modest Police District Increase*

**HAUPPAUGE, NY, NOVEMBER 2, 2009** – The Suffolk County Legislature today joined voted to approve an Operating Budget plan for 2010 which was constructed in consideration of the most severe economic crisis since the Great Depression. The \$2.64 billion bipartisan budget plan provides for the hiring of 200 new police officers, 80 new correctional officers, 11 new Deputy Sheriffs, additional staff in the District Attorney's office, more than a million dollars to keep open the Central Islip Health Center while cutting spending by **six million dollars** overall, reducing the County Executive's overly optimistic sales tax revenue projections by a full 1% or \$10.3 million and maintaining a freeze on general fund property taxes with only a modest increase in the police district levy. The budget, forged by the Legislature's bipartisan Budget Working Group, also is supported by a bipartisan majority of the Legislature.

"The Legislature today passed the most difficult budget I have ever worked on," said Presiding Officer Lindsay. "We made painful cuts where necessary in order to maintain essential services and hold the line on general fund property taxes. I'm proud of our hard work."

"I think that every member of the Legislature would agree that working through this budget process has not been an enjoyable time to be in government but I believe it is the most important time we've spent in government," said Legislator Losquadro. "This budget represents the best possible compromise between preservation of needed services and long overdue additions to public safety staffing. I am very proud to have worked on this budget," Losquadro continued. "I

would like to personally thank Presiding Officer Lindsay and the rest of the members of the Budget Working Group for their hard efforts during these very difficult times.”

The new budget plan has a strong emphasis on ensuring public safety. Because the total number of sworn Suffolk County Police Officers is currently at the lowest point in sixteen years and the number of active Police Officers is at its lowest point in almost a decade, this budget funds two new Police Officer Recruit classes of 100 officers each, one in April 2010 and one in October of 2010 for a total of 200 new officers.

Given the rise in crime that Suffolk County has experienced and the continued reduction in the number of police patrolling our streets, it was essential that more police be hired, and the Legislature’s budget provides for the hiring of 200 officers next year. It is estimated that 86 officers will retire this year and another 80 in 2010, making the 200 new Police Officers indispensable to public safety.

“Everyday it is apparent that we are facing many public safety challenges with the heroin epidemic, the unprecedented rise of gangs in our communities and it seems like I am reading about another murder almost every day,” Presiding Officer Lindsay added. “Public Safety is the number one responsibility of local government, this budget provides those essential services.”

In addition to the 200 new police Officers, the Legislature’s budget adds funds sufficient to make necessary promotions to sergeant from the existing civil service list to provide for an appropriate supervisory structure needed. The budget also funds 80 new correction Officers – 2 classes of 40 officer each, one in January and one in September, 11 new Deputy Sheriffs, additional staff critical to criminal investigations in the District Attorney’s Office and \$50,000 for the Fireman’s Training Center to train Volunteer Firefighters across Suffolk County.

In order to achieve the level of public safety desired by the Legislature, the Police District property tax levy will be increased by 3%, or \$13.3 million, or \$30 per police district taxpayer (5 West end towns).

The Legislature rejected the County Executive’s initiative to privatize County marinas and restores the popular 4-H and Family Health & Wellness programs run by Cornell Cooperative Extension in communities across Suffolk County.

The budget now goes before the County Executive who has two weeks to sign as is or veto items as he deems necessary. The Legislature has the final say on the budget by voting to sustain or override any vetoes at its next General Meeting scheduled for Tuesday, November 17<sup>th</sup> in Hauppauge.