

**PRESS RELEASE FROM
PRESIDING OFFICER WILLIAM LINDSAY**

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**SAYING THAT PUBLIC SAFETY IS AT STAKE,
BIPARTISAN COALITION OVERRIDES LEVY VETO**

***PO Lindsay, Minority Leader Losquadro Say Police,
Sheriffs, Corrections Officers Must Be Hired***

HAUPPAUGE, NY, NOVEMBER 17, 2009 – Suffolk County Legislature Presiding Officer William J. Lindsay and a bipartisan coalition of County Legislators today overrode a veto of a budget amendment authorizing the hiring of new police officers, sheriffs and correction officers, saying the officers are absolutely necessary to insure the public safety of Suffolk County residents.

“With violent crime increasing sharply in these desperate economic times and police numbers at their lowest in years, we have to add police officers to protect the safety of county residents and that is our primary responsibility as elected officials,” said Presiding Officer Lindsay. “We are not expanding the number of police, we are just trying to hold the line as more and more higher-paid officers retire. This is the least we can do to protect our constituents.”

“The replacement of a portion of the officers that have retired in recent years is imperative,” said Minority Leader Dan Losquadro. “We have absolutely reached a critical mass and without bolstering the ranks of our Police Department critical services will undoubtedly suffer. This body has come to the best possible solution, cutting spending throughout our budget and making a real investment in public safety.”

The budget amendment vetoed by County Executive Steve Levy and overridden today by the County Legislature authorizes the hiring of 200 police officers, 80 corrections officers and 11 deputy sheriffs, and also agrees to the promotion of as many as 29 officers to the rank of sergeant and provides \$50,000 for training for Fire Rescue and Emergency Services (FRES) personnel.

Suffolk County loses 80 police officers a year to retirement. Those officers retire at top pay. There has not been a police class since 2007 that would allow the county to hire replacement officers to fill the vacancies left by the retirees. The size of the county police force is at its lowest point in 16 years, while violent crime is up across the county.

Violent crime in Suffolk County during the last 12 months is up 4.7 percent. Robbery is up 8.2 percent, aggravated assault is up by 6.6 percent and firearms related robbery is up 5 percent. Presiding Officer Lindsay pointed out that the new police hiring would not increase the number of county police officers but would only stem the loss of officers through retirement.

In the latest crime data from the New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services, Suffolk was one of five so-called “Impact Jurisdictions” that showed an increase in violent

crime over the last 12 months; 12 Impact Jurisdictions, including Nassau County, showed decreases in violent crime.

"As chairman of the Legislature's Public Safety Committee, I know how undermanned our police force is, and we have to add these officers just to hold the line as retirements continue to increase," said County Legislator Jack Eddington. "We have to give our police the tools they need to protect the public safety."

"My primary responsibility as an elected official is to ensure that our residents get the police presence they deserve and demand," said County Legislator Kate Browning. "Crime is on the rise and the number of police keeps dropping and those are two trends we have to stop."

The new corrections officers must be hired. A letter from the State Commission of Corrections received earlier this year states that the county is currently in violation of state regulations requiring 866 officers at the Riverhead and Yaphank jails; there are currently just 810 corrections officers. That failure to keep adequate staffing now "raises concern on the part of the Commission as to the capability to fill expanded needs when the new correctional facility is ready to commence operations." The new jail in Yaphank is nearing completion and will open in 2011.