

PRESS RELEASE FROM
PRESIDING OFFICER WILLIAM LINDSAY

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County Legislature Approves Omnibus Budget that Limits Layoffs

Legislature Makes Tough Choices, Overrides Levy's Vetoes

HAUPPAUGE, NY, NOVEMBER 22, 2011 –The Suffolk County Legislature today voted to override County Executive Steve Levy's vetoes of the Legislature's omnibus budget that makes tough choices on layoffs and fills the \$135 million in holes in the budget presented by Mr. Levy. The Legislature's budget leaves important policy decisions up to incoming County Executive Steve Bellone.

"The bipartisan budget working group agreed before the election to forge a budget that would give the incoming County Executive a functioning county government," said Presiding Officer William J. Lindsay. "County Executive Bellone is going to have to set important priorities for his new administration, including decisions on layoffs and the John J. Foley Skilled Nursing Facility.

"This was the toughest budget we have ever been faced with in Suffolk County. We were forced to make a host of tough choices and no-one is happy with the choices we were forced to make. We did manage to limit the 710 layoffs in the County Executive's budget to 88, and we managed to plug the \$135 million in holes in Mr. Levy's budget." Those restored positions were funded for just six months.

The omnibus budget raises revenues with a combination of one-shot and recurring revenues, as well as a two percent increase in the police district property tax. To cut costs, the omnibus combined various county departments to slice administrative costs and included the 88 targeted layoffs throughout various departments.

The omnibus budget consolidated the Economic Development Department, Environment and Energy and Workforce Housing into the Planning Department and combined the Youth Bureau, Veterans Agencies, Women and Human Rights into a new Human Services Department. The consolidations saved substantial revenue by eliminating duplicative administrative positions. Cuts of more than \$16 million were made in grants to contract agencies.

The omnibus budget taps the Tax Stabilization Reserve Fund for \$12 million. Extra revenue was also obtained by the securitization of tobacco settlement revenues, gaining an additional \$20 million. Increased fees and marinas and the first rise in the county bus fare in 20 years—from \$1.50 to \$2—also raised revenue.

The Legislature made the budget changes through consideration of 20 separate budget amendments. Mr. Levy vetoed those amendments and those vetoes were overridden Tuesday, with one exception. An amendment that would have repealed a cap on the county's gasoline tax was not overridden; the money that would have been raised by that repeal would have been used to avert the county passing on \$12 million in out-of-county tuition costs.

But legislators demurred after the Legislature's Budget Review Office reported that revenue would be must less than \$12 million, leaving a huge hole in the budget. Since the county is required to pass a balanced budget, that veto was left in place.

The omnibus provides funding for the 622 positions that were restored and to operate the John J. Foley Skilled Nursing Facility but only for six months, until July of 2012.