



**EDWARD P. ROMAINE**  
**SUFFOLK COUNTY LEGISLATOR**  
**FIRST DISTRICT**

423 Griffing Avenue, Suite 2  
Riverhead, New York 11901  
(631)852-3200 / Fax: (631)852-3203

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Contact: Bill Faulk

Bill.Faulk@suffolkcountyny.gov  
(631) 852-3200  
(516) 443-6686

**LEGISLATORS PROPOSE REFORM TO BUDGET PROCESS**

Suffolk County Legislators Kennedy, Muratore, Nowick and Romaine joined together to put forward two amendments to the County Charter that would reform the budget process.

The first amendment would deal with the issue of out-of-county community college tuition. Pursuant to § 6305 of New York Education Law, any community college in the State may accept non-resident students. A community college may charge and collect from the non-resident student's home county an allocable portion of the college cost.

"This charge is usually a county charge," said Legislator John Kennedy. "This year Mr. Levy decided to pass this cost to the towns."

Legislator Lynne Nowick stated that, "it is unfair for the county to pass on the cost to the towns. This represents an unfunded mandate that really should not be a town expense."

The proposed charter law would prohibit the county from charging back the towns for costs associated with out-of-county tuition beginning with the 2013 Operating Budget, explained Legislator Ed Romaine.

The second charter amendment deals directly with when the Legislature has to vote on the Operating Budget.

"Currently, the County Charter calls for the Legislature to adopt an operating budget by November 10<sup>th</sup> each year. This usually happens after Election Day, which just isn't right and certainly not fair to the voters," commented Legislator Tom Muratore.

Legislator Romaine added, "The Legislature should adopt an Operating Budget prior to Election Day so Suffolk residents know where their Legislators stand on critical spending and taxing issues before they cast their votes."

"This charter would change the submission date of the county budget by the County Executive from the third Friday to the third Monday in September. It would require the Legislature to hold public hearings on the budget no later than the 20<sup>th</sup> of October rather than October 31<sup>st</sup>. Finally, it would require the Legislature to vote and adopt a budget before Election Day," explained Kennedy.

"Although the budget process is fair and transparent, this Charter amendment simply allows more much-needed time for both the Legislators and the public to digest it," concluded Nowick.