



Inclusion Through Diversity

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TWO PAGES

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Highlights of the **August 17, 2010** meeting of the Tompkins County Legislature

Robertson Says Proposed State Takeover of Medicaid Administration Could Cost Counties More

Legislature Chair Martha Robertson, reporting on discussions to date by a statewide commission on the State takeover of Medicaid, said she and other county representatives on the commission fear that State assumption of Medicaid administration costs, as currently proposed, will cause numerous unintended consequences and cost counties more. An appointed member of the New York State Association of Counties (NYSAC) commission, made up of representatives from across the state, Robertson was asked to chair its Service Delivery Committee at the commission's first meeting last week.

With social services' staff in counties currently administering multiple assistance programs, Robertson said if local Medicaid administration staff depart or are restricted to administer Medicaid alone in a state-funded program, Departments of Social Services could be forced to hire more local staff, costing counties more. Robertson said her colleagues maintain accessibility for clients must be improved through a takeover, communication and education of clients and others will be essential, and local districts must be involved in planning. A full state takeover of Medicaid benefits, she said, and not simply of administration, would be the best way to achieve a reduction in property taxes. The commission must submit a report to the Governor and the State Legislature by October 4.

"I am very glad to be on this committee," Chair Robertson stated. "We have an aggressive timetable to meet to come up with this report by early October. This is very serious issue for us....I think we can turn this into an opportunity. If there is a real interest in making Medicaid a better program, this is a good opportunity to do it."

Contact: Martha Robertson, Chair of the Legislature, 274-5434 or 272-0584.

Contingent Funding Approved for District Attorney's Office

The Legislature appropriated more than \$50,000 in contingency funding to cover expenses arising from prosecution of high-profile cases by the District Attorney's Office. The vote was unanimous, with Legislators Brian Robison and Nathan Shinagawa excused. The expenses are associated with expert witness testimony obtained for prosecution of the Blazej Kot murder trial and related to the investigation of the death of Shawn Greenwood, and for the Tompkins County SPCA's housing and treatment of 100 animals seized from a home in Caroline. Contingent funding for such unanticipated expenses was set aside as part of the 2010 budget.

Contact: Leslyn McBean-Clairborne, Vice Chair, Public Safety Committee, 277-5104.

Legislature Approves Two County Sites for City Public Art Program

The Legislature without dissent (Legislator Brian Robison was excused) approved the two County building sites for inclusion in the City of Ithaca Public Art Commission Mural and Street Art Program. Approved were the curved wall of the Old County Library building and the east facing wall of County Building C on Buffalo Street. Use of the sites is only by temporary license which may be revoked on at least 90 days notice, with no County obligation to maintain the site surfaces or the artwork and at no County expense. Recommended art choices will be subject to review by the appropriate program committee of the Legislature.

Contact: Dooley Kiefer, Chair, Facilities and Infrastructure Committee, 257-7453.

Marley Bialke Recognized as Distinguished Youth

The Legislature recognized 17-year-old Marley Bialke of Enfield, an incoming senior at Ithaca High School, as this month's Tompkins County Distinguished Youth. Recognized for outstanding service as an apprentice in SewGreen's summer youth program, Marley is described as "a responsible and kind individual who is always ready to help others" who "has embraced every challenge with enthusiasm and excellence." In a letter of nomination, SewGreen Coordinator Wendy Skinner calls Marley "truly exceptional." "It is unusual for a teenager to have such a positive influence on those around her, and to always be available for greater challenges," Skinner states. "Her wisdom and good judgment are beyond her years" and praises her as "a model citizen...a joyful learner, teacher, friend, and helper." The Distinguished Youth Award is cosponsored by A&B Awards and Engraving, Bangs Ambulance Service, Purity Ice Cream, and Cayuga Radio Group.

Contact: Legislature Office, 274-5434.

Among other actions, the Legislature

- Heard a report from Katie Borgella of the County Planning Department regarding the Tompkins County 2020 Energy Strategy, which strives to achieve a 20% reduction in emissions in the next ten years, an interim goal toward meeting the long-term goal in reducing emissions by 80% by 2050, as stated in the County's Comprehensive Plan. The Legislature in the future will be asked to endorse the plan.
- Authorized a contract with the Tompkins County Soil and Water Conservation District to implement projects identified as part of the County's flood hazard mitigation program, at a cost not to exceed \$25,000, the level of funding allocated in the 2010 County budget.
- Scheduled the public hearing on the 2011 Tompkins County Budget and the 2011-2015 Capital Program on Wednesday, November 3, beginning at 7:00 p.m. The hearing will be held in Legislative Chambers of the County Courthouse, 320 N. Tioga Street, Ithaca.

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