



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Betty Little

Attorney General Cuomo Applauds New York State Senate Passage of Historic Government Consolidation Measure to Reduce Waste and Save Taxpayer Money

BETTY LITTLE June 3, 2009

Cuomo's "New N.Y. Government Reorganization and Citizen Empowerment Act," will make it easier for New Yorkers to dissolve or consolidate the 10,500 local government entities that burden residents with nation's highest local taxes

ALBANY, N.Y. (June 3, 2009) - Attorney General Andrew M. Cuomo today hailed the New York State Senate for passing his historic "New N.Y. Government Reorganization and Citizen Empowerment Act," giving citizens the power to dissolve or consolidate the many layers of local government that have contributed to New York having the nation's highest local taxes.

The measure passed in the Senate today by a vote of 46 to 16. Cuomo's bill was prime sponsored in the Senate by Sen. Andrea Stewart-Cousins and Sen. Betty Little. On June 1, the bill passed the state Assembly.

The bill now goes to the Governor for his signature.

"I commend the state Senate for taking action on such a critical issue and giving local communities the ability to reduce government overhead and cut property taxes," said Attorney General Cuomo. "New York is now at an historic crossroads decades in the making.

Taxpayers may soon be truly empowered to create long overdue efficiencies in local governments and special districts across our state. I thank the Governor for his support throughout the process and I look forward to this bill finally giving New York's overburdened taxpayers the ability, where appropriate, to streamline their local governments and cut their property taxes."

Senate Majority Leader Malcolm A. Smith (D-WF-14th District) said, "Cutting wasteful government spending through government consolidation and eliminating unnecessary and costly layers of bureaucracy will reduce the crushing tax burden on millions of middle-income New Yorkers. During times of financial distress, we must find a way to do more with less, and that includes government. This bill empowers individual communities to determine the size of their government through a lasting process of reform that could potentially save millions in local property taxes. I applaud the Attorney General, as well as Senators Andrea Stewart-Cousins and Betty Little for their work on this legislation and their innovative approach to reducing the tax burden on New York families."

Senator Andrea Stewart-Cousins (D-35th District), Chairwoman of the Senate Committee on Local Governments and lead sponsor of this legislation said, "After 75 years of discussion about making government more effective and making spending more efficient, the Senate has passed legislation that truly empowers our communities and will help address the burden of property taxes on families across the State of New York. The outstanding component of this bill, in my opinion, is that it is the taxpayers who will decide how to best enhance the delivery of services and achieve savings locally. Attorney General Cuomo is to be commended for his diligence in advancing this measure, and for partnering with me and my colleagues in the Senate to address the bi-partisan issues of government reorganization and citizen empowerment that are important to all of us. This is the first step, but it is a very big first step, towards meaningful government reform and consolidation."

Senator Betty Little (R-C-IP-45th District), ranking Republican on the Senate Local Government Committee, said, "Having chaired the Senate Local Government Committee for several years, I know how needlessly confusing our municipal laws are. This complexity helps no one and, instead, makes it difficult for local governments and the taxpayers they serve to adapt to changing times. Attorney General Cuomo's bill is a smart and long overdue streamlining of many of these laws. It removes cumbersome barriers and encourages efficiency with the goal of better, less costly government. Simply put, it's about saving taxpayer dollars."

Cuomo's "New N.Y. Government Reorganization and Citizen Empowerment Act," is designed to cut government waste, reduce taxes, and provide vital services in a more efficient manner. Currently, the state's overlapping governments saddle residents with the nation's highest local taxes.

Russ Haven, Legislative Counsel for the New York Public Interest Research Group (NYPIRG), said, "There are many layers of local government that seemed like a good idea when put in place, but now are etched into stone by statute and legal requirements despite having outlived their usefulness. The Attorney General's proposal would allow- not mandate - citizens and local governments to choose to have smarter, more efficient local government. Most important, voters would always get the final say on all major decisions."

Gerald Benjamin, distinguished professor of political science at SUNY New Paltz and former member of the Lundine Commission on Local Government Efficiency and ompetitiveness said, "I am very pleased that the bill has now passed the state Legislature and I appreciate the Attorney General's leadership on the issue. It is an important step in making the rationalization of local government structures in New York possible while remaining respectful of local community values. I look forward to the governor signing it soon."

Kenneth Adams, president & CEO, The Business Council of New York State said, "Consolidation is essential to making local government services more efficient and cost-effective. It is a key step toward reducing the crushing burden of local taxes and making New York competitive again. To create private sector job growth, we must reduce the cost of government in New York and this bill is an important part of that process."

Lisa Tyson, Director of the Long Island Progressive Coalition, said, "Attorney General Cuomo is to be applauded for showing exceptional leadership in putting forward this bill. Upon receipt of the Governor's signature, it will vastly simplify the process by which concerned citizens can work towards the consolidation, streamlining and reform of Special Taxing Districts."

Cuomo's comprehensive legislative plan will streamline the often Byzantine and cumbersome process of consolidating local governmental entities, including the myriad special districts across the state. The proposal will not mandate consolidation; rather, it restructures the law to allow citizens, local officials, and counties to make the decisions themselves.

In all, there are more than 10,500 governmental entities imposing taxes and fees across New York State. This includes towns, villages, districts, and special districts such as water, sewer, and lighting districts.

As the state's chief legal officer, Attorney General Cuomo is often tasked with advising local governments on the laws regulating them. It is clear that current laws are filled with inconsistencies and complexities making meaningful reform virtually unattainable. Attorney General Cuomo's bill repeals and amends these outdated laws to allow for meaningful reform of local governments throughout the state.

For more information about Attorney General Cuomo's "New N.Y. Government Reorganization and Citizen Empowerment Act" and to view an interactive map detailing

special districts in New York State by county, visit www.oag.state.ny.us.