



NEW YORK STATE LEGISLATURE

February 7, 2011

Hon. Andrew Cuomo, Governor
The Capitol
Albany, NY 12224

Dear Governor Cuomo:

Last Tuesday, we applauded when you proposed your \$132.9 billion budget, a document that emphasized one of your top priorities was to allocate the pain of reducing state government as fairly as possible.

In keeping with that goal, we were puzzled that you proposed abolishing the Tug Hill Commission, a regional agency that provides critical services to rural communities in the four county (Jefferson, Lewis, Oneida and Oswego County) region of Central and Northern New York, instead of asking your newly created Spending And Government Efficiency (SAGE) Commission to consider it as part of a comprehensive review of state agencies and authorities.

We do not understand why the Tug Hill Commission has been singled out as one of the only commissions in the entire state to be eliminated through the budget process, when the fate of other, similar commissions, authorities and agencies will be decided by the SAGE Commission.

We realize that at a time when the state is facing a massive deficit, you are looking to reduce duplication and foster greater efficiencies. That is a goal we share and applaud. However, we believe a fair analysis of the role of the Tug Hill Commission would show it is actually helping you carry out the goals you outlined in your State of the State message and in your budget plan.

The commission's staff is currently providing assistance to numerous communities that are looking at dissolution studies. It also provides assistance to rural part-time local government officials, helping them to share services and allowing them to avoid hiring their own full time professional staff.

Unlike many local governments, rural communities in the Tug Hill Plateau often operate with very few full time staff members, outside of their town clerk and highway staff. The professional staff of the Tug Hill Commission helps rural, part-time officials provide invaluable basic services to their communities at a fraction of what it would cost if they were forced to hire full-time staff to replace the services provided by the agency.

We would appreciate it if you would reconsider your decision as part of your 30-day budget amendments, and instead refer the fate of the agency to the SAGE Commission so it can be

weighed alongside other similar agencies across the state. We believe the SAGE Commission will find the Tug Hill Commission already helps make state and local government leaner, more efficient and more cost effective to the people of the State of New York.

Respectfully,



Patricia A. Ritchie
State Senator



Joseph A. Griffo
State Senator



William A. Barclay
Member of Assembly



Ken Blankenbush
Member of Assembly



Claudia Tenney
Member of Assembly