

NEW YORK STATE ASSEMBLY Committee on Cities



Spring 2014 Newsletter

FELIX ORTIZ, CHAIRMAN

SHELDON SILVER, SPEAKER



Dear Friend:

Attending to the needs of New York State's sixty-two cities is vitally important to me as the new Chairman of the Cities Committee.

We must acknowledge the existing problems cities are confronted with and assist them with common sense options to help keep them on the right track for stable and sustainable growth, both economically and with a vision of the individual characteristics that make each city unique.

I look forward to working with local elected officials, the Assembly and Senate members who represent cities, and the Governor to ensure the fiscal health and improve the quality of life of New York's cities.

Sincerely, *Felix W. Ortiz*

CHAIRMAN ORTIZ GOES ON A STATEWIDE LISTENING TOUR

As the newly appointed Chairman of the New York State Assembly Standing Committee on Cities, Assemblymember Felix Ortiz embarked on a tour of cities, with the goal of eventually visiting all sixty-two of New York's cities. The purpose of these visits was to meet with mayors and local officials to create a partnership. The goal of such partnership is to work together to improve the economic conditions of the cities in New York State. Many times dividers are in place on the types of issues that face downstate and upstate cities, but Chairman Ortiz discovered that certain issues such as tough fiscal problems know no bounds and affect cities across the state.

While meeting with mayors from around the Capitol Region, one issue came to light, as a storm raged outside the building where the meeting was held. With the increasing number of natural disasters, mayors expressed the dire need for additional funding

to offset expenses related to disaster relief and preparedness. The mayors are concerned for the safety of their residents because their cities' budgets can no longer sustain emergency funds to handle natural disasters. Many other cities across the state also face the same situation. Chairman Ortiz is planning to introduce legislation to create an "Emergency Financial Aid Fund" to help cities deal with natural disasters. The creation of this fund would provide cities with security by knowing that funding will be available to deal with emergencies and risk mitigation. The fund would be one part of an Urban Agenda Chairman Ortiz plans on advancing to deal with the collective and unique needs of cities. "I hope these visits secure a strong working relationship with fellow elected officials that consequently lead to the advancement of ideas that will promote growth, renewal and prosperity for all the cities of New York State," said Chairman Ortiz.



Chairman Ortiz conducts a Cities' committee meeting in the Speaker's conference room near the close of the 2013 Legislative Session.



Chairman Ortiz, joined by Majority Leader Joseph Morelle, and Honorable Thomas Richards, City of Rochester Mayor exchange views on problems Rochester faces while the Chairman was on his Statewide Listening Tour.



Chairman Ortiz meets with Mayors from the Capital Region to discuss issues of their cities. Pictured left to right: Chairman Ortiz, Honorable Daniel J. Dwyer, City of Rensselaer Mayor, Honorable Gary McCarthy, City of Schenectady Mayor, and Honorable Lou Rosamilia, City of Troy Mayor.



Chairman Ortiz meets with Honorable Thomas Roach, City of White Plains Mayor, and other area State Legislators, to listen to issues that the Westchester County City faces. Pictured left to right: Chairman Ortiz, Honorable Thomas Roach, Senator Andrea Stewart-Cousins, and Assemblyman David Buchwald.

FISCAL STRESS MONITORING SYSTEM HEARING

It is no secret that cities in this state are facing numerous challenges to their fiscal well-being. Across the country cities have been forced to file for bankruptcy and take other steps to avoid a financial meltdown. The Committee, under the leadership of Chairman Felix Ortiz, is examining options to prevent this tragedy from happening in New York State.

On Monday, June 10, 2013, the Committee and Chairman held a hearing on the New York State Comptroller's new Fiscal Stress Monitoring System and fiscal profiles created by the Comptroller for several cities. Testimony was heard from the Assistant Comptroller for Local Government Accountability, Deputy Comptroller for Budget and Policy Analysis, Honorable Dayton King, Mayor of the City of Gloversville, and Honorable Thomas S. Richards, Mayor of the City of Rochester.

Remarks heard from the State Comptroller's office included a detailed explanation on the new Fiscal Stress Monitoring System where the Comptroller's office measures the level of fis-

cal stress the municipality faces rather than measuring its fiscal health. Once such measurements are taken by utilizing nine fiscal and fourteen environmental indicators, the municipality is categorized into one of three different categories. The main goal of the System is to identify localities that are in significant stress or approaching stress, and to provide information to local officials and taxpayers on the factors driving the stress so an effective plan can be made to rectify such financial ailments.

In addition, the Committee listened to testimony from two cities for which the Comptroller had created a fiscal profile. One suggestion made by the Mayor of Gloversville was a request for a comprehensive study to be funded that would examine different consolidation options for municipal government. The Mayor of Rochester suggested that additional direct aid given to municipalities would be extremely beneficial for cities across the state. Lastly, the mayors testified about their experiences working with the Comptroller's office and how helpful the fiscal profiles were to them.



Chairman Ortiz, joined by Assemblyman John McDonald, hears testimony from Nathaalie Carey, Assistant Comptroller for Local Government Accountability, and Robert Ward, Deputy Comptroller for Budget and Policy Analysis from the New York State Comptroller's Office, on the new fiscal stress monitoring system developed by the Comptroller's Office.

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SPRING 2014 NEWSLETTER

CITIES COMMITTEE 101

The New York State Assembly Standing Committee on Cities is primarily responsible for the initiation and review of legislation affecting New York State's sixty-two cities. Bills referred to the Committee on Cities are those that would amend city charters, the Administrative Code of the City of New York, the General City Law, the Second Class Cities Law, or the General Municipal Law. Bills that relate to cities and would amend general bodies of law such as Public Health,

Housing, Energy, Transportation, Education or Economic Development may also be referred to the Cities Committee if they have specific or local applicability.

The Committee is concerned with the enactment of laws that will further improve the ability of cities to address their unique and their common problems, as well as prohibiting the enactment of laws that would impede city governments in their delivery of local services.