Press Release

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For Immediate Release

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Legislator Day Initiates Hearing to Enact Substantial Cost Reduction in County Government

New City, NY (August 16th, 2010) – Rockland County Legislator Edwin Day (New City-Haverstraw), Deputy Minority Leader, has formally requested that Rockland County eliminate the Tourism Department and move that function to the Rockland County Economic Development Committee (REDC) at a minimum estimated cost saving to taxpayers of $250,000.

"Politicians talk a good game about saving taxpayers money, but the true measure should mirror the adage 'actions speak louder than words'. It is my view that we have a perfect opportunity for both a better product and substantial cost savings, and I will leave no stone unturned in that quest," said Legislator Day.

The Rockland County Tourism Department has been in place since 1994, functioning from the outset under the able stewardship of the late Heather Duke, who passed away suddenly on July 15th. She oversaw a small office of two employees, and the 2010 budget listed the operating budget of just over a half a million dollars.

In his proposal, Legislator Day said "We all mourn the passing of our very well respected County employee Heather Duke. She will be missed, but it is extremely important to her legacy that the bar of excellence she brought to the tourism function, literally single handedly, be exceeded."

Legislator Day noted last year he sponsored a review during the county budget adoption process which showed that potentially $250,000 could be saved if tourism efforts were turned over to the REDC, a private, nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting business in the region. Not only does the President/CEO of the REDC have vast experience in tourism, this model is successfully used in other Hudson Valley municipalities such as Dutchess County. As cost savings were largely dependent on layoffs, officials were hesitant to enact these recommendations. With the director position becoming vacant, and strong indications that the two other employees may avail themselves of County or State retirement incentives, those dynamics have changed appreciably.

"I recognize that the County Executive recently announced another appointment to the Tourism director position, and that as an 'at pleasure' appointment he is entitled to do that. However, it should be completely understood that our legislature controls the purse strings of government, and how we fund this function is fully within our domain, not his," said Legislator Day.

Legislator Day concluded by saying that "This is a 'back to back homerun' situation for our taxpayers, as I envision initially bringing all available resources within Rockland; community, business, civic groups to bear in an effort to promote our County, at a savings of a quarter of a million dollars. As this model progresses, I see additional tourism dollars coming into our County that will further minimize the need to go to our beleaguered taxpayers to fund government. That is called doing the job, smarter, leaner, and more efficiently, which is exactly what the people rightfully should expect from their elected officials."

This matter is scheduled to be heard at the next meeting of the Economic Development Committee scheduled for 5:30 PM, Wednesday, September 1st, 2010 Allison-Parris building, Legislative Chambers, 11 New Hempstead Road, New City. The public is invited to attend.

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