



July 22, 2009

Cuomo touts consolidating governments

Attorney general pays valley a visit

*By Jenny Lee-Adrian
Poughkeepsie Journal*

PLEASANT VALLEY - Attorney General Andrew Cuomo praised new legislation that makes it easier for elected officials and citizens to consolidate or dissolve layers of government.

The new law allows government officials to begin consolidation or dissolution of governments. It also allows citizens to get a referendum on the ballot that seeks the same result.

The state already has about 10,500 layers of government from towns to villages to sewer districts, said Cuomo, who authored the new law. Cuomo said he believes high taxes come from the high cost of government.

"The cost of government is too high," Cuomo said. "The taxes are too high. You just can't continue to increase the taxes. You will make people leave this state."

Residents such as Rabbi Hanoch Hecht, of the Rhinebeck Jewish Center, were grateful for the legislation.

"I believe, as a rabbi, this will help many constituents who struggle to make a living," Hecht said. "To lower taxes, even by a small margin, will help the local constituents."

The attorney general also unveiled a new Web site called www.reformnygov.com that explains the law to residents and tells them how they can start a petition to merge or close redundant government offices.

To put a referendum on the ballot, citizens need to collect signatures of 5,000 people or 10 percent of registered voters in the municipality, whichever is less. In municipalities with fewer than 500 people, petitioners need signatures of 20 percent of registered voters, according to the law.

Words of backing

Pleasant Valley Town Supervisor Frank Susczynski, Assembly members Joel Miller, R-Poughkeepsie, and Marc Molinaro, R-Red Hook, voiced their support of the law.

"For those of us who actually believe voters are the fundamental foundation of an American democracy," Molinaro said, "we happen to think this legislation makes a lot of sense."

Miller concurred, saying, "We need a mechanism to consolidate those entities that are costing more."

Other town supervisors, elected officials and business leaders attended the press conference to lend their support.