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Assembly Republicans protest new DMV fees; area Dems support them

KINGSTON – Assembly members Marc Molinaro (R, C, I – Red Hook), Nancy Calhoun (R, C – Blooming Grove) and Pete Lopez (R, C, I – Schoharie), were joined by county clerks from throughout the state as well as by county legislators and tax advocacy groups at a press conference to rally against the increased drivers' license and license plate fees imposed on all New York State drivers, some of which take affect today.

“Unfortunately, this scheme is just another way for Albany to balance a very unbalanced state budgetary deficit. Requiring residents with perfectly good licenses or even those who have recently registered a car to ‘update’ their car plates is an example of government excess and impracticality. Mandating that New York State drivers pay for it out of their own pockets, especially during these times when every penny counts, simply adds insult to injury,” said Lopez, at the rally held in Kingston today.

“We can't afford to pay another dime”, said Molinaro. “New Yorkers are willing to sacrifice, but we can no longer afford to be held financially hostage to the tax and spend policies that continue to cripple our economy and damage our communities. Hard working middle-class families and small businesses, which are the backbone of our economy as well as the heart of our communities, demand relief but instead they get increased fees on driver's licenses and vehicle registrations. This is outrageous!”

“It is unacceptable that the three men in a room from New York City running this state first pass a budget, which was beyond the means the state could afford, and then continue their spending spree with an MTA bailout, which picks the pockets of every single business and vehicle owner in the Mid-Hudson region”, said Assemblywoman Calhoun. “The taxes and fees starting to hit already overburdened families will force people from this area, and ultimately the state, if Governor Paterson does not listen to the voices of those he is taxing into poverty. It is time to stop the MTA from using Mid-Hudson taxpayers as their own personal ATM.”

One area Democrat assembly member says he reluctantly supports the fees.

“In view of this year's unprecedented \$21 billion deficit,

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the Legislature worked with the Governor to pass a timely budget that protects essential services and the quality of our health care and education systems without further shifting the burden to property taxpayers”, said Kevin Cahill. “While it is not at all pleasant to curtail services and raise taxes and fees, the plan strikes a fair balance between necessary spending reductions, the application of federal stimulus aid and increases in revenue sources.

Another local Democrat, Frank Skartados, notes the fee package was part of the overall state budget, which he supported.

As part of the enacted 2009-10 State Budget, drivers' license and vehicle registration fees will increase by 25 percent on September 1, 2009. Additionally, effective April 1, 2010, all registered vehicles will be required to get new license plates and renewed registrations. This will require all New York State motorists to pay not only the increased fees but also an additional \$10 fee for the new license. This would total at least \$130 for an average Class D license holder registering an average 3,500 pound car (an increase of over \$35 from the current total of \$95). All three members of the Assembly at today's rally voted against this provision of the budget (A.159-B).

Nina Postupack, Ulster County Clerk, stated, “In these difficult economic times, DMV fee increases and the plate reissuance program places an increased financial burden on the taxpayers of Ulster County and upstate New York who depend on their cars and trucks for their transportation and livelihood.

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