



Suffolk County's Largest Independent Union

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December 1, 2011

Dear Presiding Officer Lindsay and all Suffolk Legislators,

The officers and members of AME highly respect the work of all of our legislators and the job they do for their constituents; however, it is important to keep in mind that our members are constituents and taxpayers as well. And, as their bargaining unit representative, AME has both the legal and moral obligation to speak and fight on behalf of these members.

As the clock is ticking toward a budget that, for the first time in 21 years includes layoffs, we enthusiastically support Resolution #1964, **repealing the gasoline sales tax cap**. As you appropriately noted at the Budget and Finance Committee meeting on November 29, 2011, the county is in desperate need of this additional revenue.

We further ask consideration that this Resolution be amended and linked **specifically to the restoration of jobs abolished in the 2012 adopted budget**. If the amount of revenue realized proves to be insufficient in raising the \$3.5 million needed to fund the 88 laid off positions for the first six months of 2012; the amount raised could still be used to offset utilizing the tax stabilization fund for full restoration.

Since this revenue was **not** included in the 2012 adopted budget, it is unaccounted for; and therefore, could be used to fund and/or restore positions which were cut in the budget. And as a side note of interest, restoring these funds without a *specific intention* could actually divert this money *away* from saving jobs.

In closing, I respectfully ask that you remember: the last time we negotiated under extreme pressure, we helped close a 2009 budget gap with a 2-week lag payroll, totaling \$30 million from all county unions. And yet the county ended that year with a \$33 million *surplus*; a year in which we also accepted a wage freeze. I hope these important and very relevant facts shed some light as to our reluctance to give at a time when it is clearly known that county revenues simply do not meet county expenses. This fiscal imbalance will reappear each year until the structural problem has been adequately repaired.

Amending Resolution #1964, **with language to restore abolished positions**, has the potential to yield overwhelming bi-partisan support and offers the best way to start the New Year.

Sincerely,

Cheryl A. Felice

Cc: Board of Directors

