



# ULSTER COUNTY LEGISLATIVE NEWS

ULSTER COUNTY NEWS INFORMATION  
OFFICE OF ULSTER COUNTY LEGISLATURE  
244 FAIR STREET  
KINGSTON, NEW YORK, 12401

PHONE: 845.340-3900  
FAX: 845.340.3651  
www.co.ulster.ny.us  
[www.ulstercountyny.gov](http://www.ulstercountyny.gov)

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **LEGISLATOR LOPEZ CALLS FOR MORE TRANSPARENCY WHEN CONSIDERING SALARIES OF ELECTED OFFICIALS**

Legislator Craig Lopez (R-Shawangunk/Wawarsing) introduced a Local Law that will close a loophole in the County Charter to insure voters know the salary of the people they are voting for.

The Ulster County Charter established a Periodic Compensation Review Committee (PCR) to make recommendations every two years on the salaries of elected officials including the County Executive, Sheriff, Comptroller, Clerk and the Legislature. Currently this report is to be delivered by September 30 to the Legislature who ultimately approves any salary increases. Lopez proposes changing the deadline to June 30.

According to Lopez, the original goal of the Ulster County Charter was to allow the sitting legislature to vote on the salary of incoming elected officials – including the legislature - because, they didn't want legislators to vote on their own salary or consider who had just been elected when voting on salaries for other elected officials.

Lopez explained that the salary of elected officials is important enough that it can only be done by Local Law and any change in Local Law requires resolutions setting public hearings, publishing legal notices, collecting public comments and a number of other steps. "Even when it is a Local Law we all agree on this can take two months or more", Lopez said. He does not feel the current deadline gives Legislators or taxpayers sufficient time to consider recommendations, weigh in at public hearings or contemplate potential salary increases before Election Day.

Lopez said "While I agree the last salary increase for legislators was long overdue, several of my fellow Legislators shared my frustration that this oversight in the Charter forces any Local Law for salary considerations to come for a vote after many officials are comfortably re-elected." He feels that simply changing the date the PCR delivers their recommendations from September 30 to June 30 will allow sufficient time for the Legislature and the public to consider the options, hold public hearings and still take timely legislative action before Election Day.

Lopez said his ultimate goal is to make the process more transparent to the public. "The most important thing is for the voters to have all the facts when they vote." Lopez said.

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