



ULSTER COUNTY LEGISLATIVE NEWS

ULSTER COUNTY NEWS INFORMATION

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Republican Legislative Caucus Condemns County Executive Metzger for Denying Workers a Raise Before the Holidays

(Kingston, NY) – The Ulster County Legislature’s Minority Caucus has received and reviewed County Executive Metzger’s December 18th Veto Message and are disappointed that the first ever use of the Executive’s line-item veto authority was exercised at the expense of hard-working Ulster County employees.

Minority Leader Kevin Roberts (District 12) stated, “The Legislature, in a bipartisan vote, attempted to right a wrong created by ambiguous contract language and correct these employees’ salaries. Clearly phone calls were made, and political cover was requested. Fourteen members of the Majority Caucus signed a letter which essentially ties our hands, declares that the united Republican Caucus is powerless, and announces that any attempt to override the Executive’s veto would fail,” he added.

“This action is disingenuous, and if I’m being honest, a little deceitful,” commented **Deputy Minority Leader Craig Lopez (District 14)**. “This particular issue with these particular employees has been discussed since Fall 2023. The County Executive waited all this time to request an opinion from her labor lawyers and then held onto that opinion for an additional three days before sharing it as part of her veto message. That is not responsible or respectful governing in my book. Instead of working with the Legislature to find a solution, the County Executive’s veto demonstrates a lack of empathy for the very employees who keep our county running,” he added.

The Minority Caucus has emphasized that the amendment to the 2025 budget at issue was introduced and made publicly available as part of the Legislature’s annual review and revision process. It was the subject of numerous discussions and at a number of publicly held meetings over the past 2 months. These discussions took place in the presence of the Executive’s Budget Director and many “cabinet level” staff.

"This issue should never have reached the point where a veto became necessary," said **Legislator Jason J. Kovacs, Esq., a member of the Ways and Means Committee (District 3)**. "The inequities in the original collective bargaining agreement should have been resolved long ago by returning to the collective bargaining table and ensuring that all DPW employees were treated fairly and equitably. The blame here lies squarely with the Executive branch. First, the former County Executive failed to negotiate a fair and transparent agreement that truly reflected the needs and rights of all DPW workers. Then, the current County Executive compounded the issue by not proactively addressing these inequities through good-faith negotiations. While her veto reflects a correct reading of the Taylor Law, it does not absolve her administration of responsibility for failing to resolve this matter earlier. Instead of working collaboratively with the Legislature to resolve this matter, the County Executive has chosen to deflect blame. Meanwhile, 64 DPW employees—the backbone of our County’s operations—have been left waiting for justice. These workers were led to believe they would see long-overdue raises. They’ve had their hopes dashed, not once but twice: first by an inadequate collective bargaining process, and then by an Executive veto that prioritized bureaucratic excuses over doing what’s right."

“These workers are the backbone of our county, and they deserve more than excuses and delays. To deny them this modest raise right before the holidays is not just poor leadership it’s a failure to stand by the people who serve our community every day. The grinch has definitely stolen Christmas from these families this year,” **Minority Leader Roberts** concluded.

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