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**MAJORITY LEADER**  
**ULSTER COUNTY LEGISLATURE**

**MAJORITY ADDRESS**

**MARCH 17, 2015**

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John R. Parete, Chairman

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Richard A. Parete

Thomas J. Briggs, Majority Whip

Jeanette Provenzano

David B. Donaldson, Vice Chairman

Hector S. Rodriguez

Manna Jo Greene

Kenneth Wishnick

Mr. Chairman, Minority Leader, fellow Legislators, members of the Press, and respectfully, everyone else that has taken the time to be here tonight.

Good Evening-

I appreciate the opportunity to speak with you again and present a report regarding the accomplishments, issues, concerns, and goals of the Majority in the Ulster County Legislature. This presentation contains facts, opinions and my points of view as they pertain to the Ulster County Legislature and for the people of Ulster County.

In 2014 - (through February) 2015 Members of our Caucus have been busy. The Legislature has Adopted 39 Resolutions Initiated by the Majority. They cover many subjects and were offered by different members of our Caucus. I would like to highlight a few to provide an understanding of the variety of issues we are involved with and the Legislators who sponsored the Resolutions.

# 41 - Sponsor - Legislator Jeanette Provenzano - Adopting Proposed Local Law No. 17 of 2014

The purpose of this law is to include Electronic cigarettes in the existing law. There are instances when people smoke electronic cigarettes on Ulster County property endangering themselves and others from the emissions they produce.

# 407 - Sponsors - Legislators Kenneth Wishnick and Hector Rodriguez - Adopting Amended Proposed Local Law No. 10 of 2014

The purpose of this law is to prevent inhumane treatment of dogs by fastening them to stationary objects for a prolonged period of time, which can be a threat to the dog, other animals, and human beings. Dutchess County is now considering a similar type of law for their needs.

# 317 - Sponsors - Legislators Dave Donaldson and Donald Gregorius - Adopting Proposed Local law No. 8 of 2014

The purpose of this Law is to require the display of Gasoline prices in a manner that makes plainly visible to the consumer the difference, if any, between the price per gallon for payment by cash, debit, or credit.

# 349 - Sponsors - Legislators Tracey Bartels and Manna Jo Greene -  
Adopting Proposed Local Law No. 6 of 2014

The purpose of this Law is to achieve energy efficiency and renewable energy goals, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, mitigate the effect of global climate change, and advance a clean energy economy. This will be done by establishing a program that will allow the Energy Improvement Corporation, acting on behalf of the County of Ulster, to make funds available to qualified property owners that will be repaid through charges on real properties benefited by such funds.

# 346 - Sponsor - Legislator Lynn Archer - Establishing A Broadband Policy For The County Of Ulster

The purpose of this Resolution is to recognize that the Ulster County Legislature believes in order to compete in today's digital world that high-speed Internet access is an essential 21st. Century infrastructure that will enhance economic competitiveness, improve productivity and access to education, decrease impacts on the environment and increase advancement opportunities for our residents.

# 270 - Sponsor - Legislator Peter Loughran - Establishing A Policy To Accept Bids In Electronic Format

The Purpose of this Resolution is to make the purchasing process as competitive and objective as possible, while striving to promote high standards for all business relationships, and authorize the receipt of bids in an electronic format.

These are just a few of the many accomplishments Majority members of the Legislature have made. There are numerous other Resolutions initiated from the Minority and requested by the County Executive that have also passed in this time period.

While we have had many successes by individual Legislators and the Legislature as a whole, there are concerns that need to be addressed. One of our major concerns is the selection process of Standing Committee appointments by the Chairman. In business, there are many ways and methods to achieve optimum performance and keep employees motivated for success. I would also offer they apply to leadership in most organizations including Government, and for assigning our Standing Committee appointments. The following example is one of many that can produce desired results.

- 1 - Find the best qualified people for the positions
- 2 - Provide them the necessary tools
- 3 - Remove as many obstacles as possible
- 4 - Give them encouragement and acknowledgement
- 5 - Monitor their efforts
- 6 - Evaluate their performance

This is just common sense and utilized by people I have known over the years that I consider smart and successful.

As Majority Leader I realize I have responsibilities to the members of our Caucus, the Ulster County Legislature and the people of Ulster County we serve. I believe it is my job to have all members of the Caucus provide their choices for Committees, construct a plan to honor as many of the choices that I agree with, meet with the Chairman and present my plan, answer any questions as he or she may have regarding my input and provide documentation. This was all done for our 2015 Standing Committees.

When the final Standing Committee appointments came from the Chairman, they were so different from what I presented, it was hard to believe our requests were considered.

Our colleagues on the other side of the aisle fared far better than we did. They asked to keep the same Standing Committee appointments with only one "Requested" change. The Chairman honored all their requests. We as the Majority received nine "Unrequested" changes that have serious implications. We believe these changes were a direct result of our choice not to vote for him as Chairman for this year's session.

That belief becomes clearer when I read comments attributed to the Chairman in a January 28, 2015 article in the Daily Freeman. The Article states - "*Parete said the shake-up among Democrats was intended to ensure that Legislators gained a "broad base" of knowledge" rather than only those topics in which they are interested*". The Article further reports - "He said he didn't make wholesale changes to GOP appointments because he simply honored Republican recommendations". Why wouldn't our friends across the aisle also "need a shake-up" to ensure they gain a "broad base of knowledge" as well? There's a double standard here that doesn't belong in the Ulster County Legislature, and I can think of over 180,000 reasons why.

Legislators, environmental groups, and the public consider Legislators Tracey Bartels and Manna Jo Greene in the highest regard for protecting the Environment. Their work and commitment is nothing less than outstanding. Removing them from the Energy and Environment Committee is an insult to say the least, and deserves a close look by the environmental community. Other concerning removals from Standing Committees are Legislators Jeanette Provenzano and Hector Rodriguez. Their expertise, experience, and institutional knowledge is a significant loss for the Ways and Means Committee. We have better conversations and insight when people, who have been there for years, understand the issues, participate and vote. I must also mention that Legislator Kenneth Wishnick has been removed from the Economic Development Committee. This is another example of losing a Legislator's experience in business for a Committee established to Develop Business.

His background includes Executive Director of Planning and Economic Development in Cumberland County, New Jersey. He is a Legislator that doesn't hide in the convenience of anonymity and will state his opinions openly- a trait not appreciated by some. I and other Legislators have likewise been removed from Standing Committees that we have served well.

The impacts of removing Legislators that are experienced and knowledgeable of the complex issues pertaining to their Standing Committees are serious. What we avoid can be just as important as what we do. Experience counts and should not be dismissed offhand, which is counterproductive to making better choices.

The Democratic Majority will continue to do a commendable service on any Committee we are appointed, although our expertise, experience, and specific knowledge may not apply to the new positions. Regardless of our inability to change this situation, we all will do our best for the people of Ulster County.

As the Majority in the Legislature we need to look ahead as well as comment on the current situations. Our goals and interests are important to provide our agenda for the coming year and beyond. They are in no particular order. Some of these issues will be accomplished in the near term and some will take longer.

We welcome ideas from virtually every source for consideration including the public. We also look forward to working with the Minority to insure sensible Legislation will pass. I hope this list grows and we keep up with that growth by solving the current concerns and opportunities. Our list includes -

#### # Completing a "Green Fleet" Policy

The intent of this idea is to establish a "Green Fleet" Policy that will address the vehicles of the "fleet" under the control of Ulster County in order to improve vehicle fuel efficiency and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

#### # Provide a solid working plan to make Broadband technology a reality in Ulster County

A comprehensive plan for Broadband technology is an integral step in providing Broadband service to all the residents of Ulster County. This is important for Individuals, Medical requirements, Business, Government and virtually anyone wanting to share information on a real-time basis.

## # Resolve the issues surrounding Suspicionless Warrants Checks

This is a temporarily suspended policy from the Sheriff's Department. There are significant issues involved that need to be resolved. Public Safety, Illegal Search and Seizures as defined in the Fourth Amendment of the Constitution of the United States, and the Civil Rights Act of 1964 are concerns that may involve the Federal Government.

## # Establish a workable Solid Waste solution for our Municipal Solid Waste, eliminating the need to export our waste at significant expense

Ulster County has established a Solid Waste Management Improvement Commission. We support and encourage the Commission to find sound solutions for Municipal Solid Waste and refer that information to the Resource Recovery Agency.

## # Climate Smart Committee

We support the Climate Smart Committee and encourage Ulster County to implement the recommendations of the 2010 Siemens Energy Audit, and subsequent findings, to reduce energy consumption in Ulster County Facilities.

## # Continue to advocate the takeover of the Safety Net Program by New York State

The Safety Net is a program which is not required or funded by the Federal Government. In January of 2011, New York State dramatically lowered their participation in sharing the costs of the program thereby shifting those costs to the Counties. This is another underfunded State Mandate and should be taken over completely by New York State. We currently spend approximately seven million dollars a year for Safety Net.

# Establish our new Mobil Mental Health program on a full time basis

This valuable service has been brought forward by our County Executive. The Mobil Mental Health Team is available to assist County residents, school districts, police, ambulance personnel and other first responders as they respond to mental health crisis issues. Currently the service is available on a part time basis every day. We need to help find a way to increase this important service to a full time basis.

Obviously, this is not a complete list of our goals. Legislators are currently considering other concerns and will bring them forward. These and other issues are routinely discussed in conversations with our colleagues.

Thank you for the opportunity to share these views. We look forward to working with our friends across the aisle and with the County Executive to make important Legislation a reality for the people of Ulster County.