

NEWS

RENSSELAER COUNTY LEGISLATURE

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GOP Legislators Kill Resolution to Return over \$800,000 to Rensselaer County Taxpayers

Troy—A resolution introduced by County Legislator Kevin Harrington (D-East Greenbush, North Greenbush, Poestenkill) to terminate a controversial account controlled by the Republican Majority was defeated in committee. The resolution called for more than \$800,000 of the taxpayers' money, currently held in the Chamber Renovation and Repair Fund, to be used to help the County avoid borrowing at year's end.

The purpose and validity of the Chamber Renovation Fund has been disputed for years. It was established in 1999 when around \$69,000 was earmarked for improvements to the Legislative Chambers. Since then, the fund has been augmented each year with money "saved" by the Legislature and transferred into the Chamber Renovation Fund. As of March 10, 2009, the fund balance was \$844,304, over 12 times the original amount designated for improvements a decade ago.

"In most organizations, if you have a budget surplus amounting to hundreds of thousands of dollars year after year, you reduce the size of your budget," remarked Legislator Harrington. "The GOP run Legislature, on the other hand, routinely over-budgets for its operations, then congratulates itself on its frugal spending habits and stashes the resulting 'savings' in the Chamber Renovation account. That's called 'padding the budget.' Rensselaer County taxpayers are paying for a cushy political slush fund."

"I was disappointed, but not surprised, that the resolution never made it out of committee so that it could come to the floor for healthy debate and discussion," said Legislator Flora Fasoldt (D- Sand Lake, Schodack, Nassau). "The Republican Majority introduces urging resolutions month after month that call for the state to reduce taxes. Good sound bites for them, maybe, but they accomplish nothing."

"This resolution provided an opportunity to actually do something for our over-burdened taxpayers, but instead of taking action, the Republican Majority chose to hold on to more than \$800,000 in their control," added Legislator Brian Zweig (D - East Greenbush, North Greenbush, Poestenkill)