

THE
ASSOCIATION OF TOWNS
OF THE

STATE OF NEW YORK

GERALD K. GEIST
Executive Director

KIMBERLY A. SPLAIN
Deputy Director

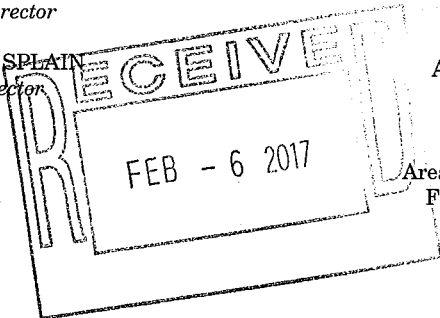
150 State Street
Albany, NY 12207

Telephone
Area Code 518 - 465-7933
Fax # 518 - 465-0724

LORI A. MITHEN-DeMASI
Counsel

SARAH B. BRANCATELLA
Associate Counsel

KATHLEEN N. HODGDON
Associate Counsel



February 1, 2017

As you may already be aware, the Association of Towns sent a letter to our members on Jan. 11, 2017 letting you know about the Governor's plan to require counties to develop new, voter-approved efficiency plans. Since then, the Executive Budget was released, and the news is not good. The Governor is attempting to make AIM funding contingent upon the Legislature's approval of the aforementioned proposed efficiency mandate, meaning that if the Legislature does not pass the budget with the Governor's new "Countywide Shared Services Property Tax Savings Plans," New York towns, villages and cities will not receive AIM funding at all.

The Association of Towns will not stand idly by when faced with proposals that undermine local representative democracy, threaten home rule and continue to use towns as a scapegoat for high property taxes in New York. On Jan. 30, 2017, we testified before parts of the state Legislature to emphatically oppose the parts of the proposed Executive Budget that we believe are harmful to town governments. I was honored to be joined by Rebecca Haines, Town Clerk, Town of Ellery, William Moehle, Town Supervisor, Town of Brighton, and Edmond Theobald, Town Supervisor, Town of Manlius. They were able to use their firsthand experiences as leaders of their towns to show the Legislature that towns *already* work together efficiently to bring a high level of service to residents.

We simply cannot allow the Governor to hold AIM funding hostage, nor can towns rely on the good will of counties to do what is best for town government. A Jan. 25, 2017 editorial in the *Schenectady Daily Gazette* discussed tying AIM to consolidation and said "The Legislature should cross that line out of the budget before the ink dries, or face a revolt like they've never seen. Make sure your local representative in the Assembly and the Senate knows how you feel." We also urge you contact your representatives. Use a web site like www.openstates.org to find your state representative's contact information. We will also have petitions at our Annual Meeting and Training School February 19-22, 2017 opposing the proposal. Additionally, along with New York Conference of Mayors Executive Director Peter Baynes, I will be hosting a session at the Annual Meeting on the Governor's plan and its potential affect on local government, and we want to hear from you. If you would like to take advantage of our negotiated hotel room rate, please call 1(877)303-0104 or book at <https://resweb.passkey.com/go/AOT2017> by Feb. 7, 2017. On-site registration will also be available.

Let's remind the state Legislature and Governor of the importance and value of towns and home rule. Do not hesitate to contact our office with any questions, and let us know the feedback you get from your representatives. We are here to fight for you, and we are proud of the work towns do.

Sincerely,

Gerry Geist, Executive Director