



STATE OF NEW YORK

ELIOT SPITZER
GOVERNOR

April 23, 2007

Dear Local Government Official:

Today I issued an Executive Order creating a Commission on Local Government Efficiency and Competitiveness. The Commission will analyze and make recommendations on the measures we must adopt to facilitate and expedite partnership among State and local governments to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of local governments. The establishment of this Commission is part of our overall effort to streamline government at every level.

There are more than 4200 taxing jurisdictions in the State. Many of these, including counties, cities, towns, villages and special districts, reflect needs and population concentrations which have changed substantially from when the local government was created. In some cases, local governments no longer adequately serve the needs of a shifting and mobile populace and the demands of the increasingly globalized economy in which our nation, State and municipalities must compete.

The Commission will address the issues of local government merger, consolidation, regionalized government, shared services and smart growth. When thoughtfully applied with assistance from the State, these practices can reduce the number of taxing jurisdictions, while reducing the cost and improving the quality of the many vital services that local governments provide to New York residents and businesses.

The Commission, whose members include local government officials and academic experts in the area of local government, will deliberate, hold public hearings and report its recommendations within a year.¹ This is an ambitious and expedited schedule for a project as expansive and important as this one. However, we can't afford to wait even that single year to begin work on the task at hand.

I am therefore asking that the local government leadership in each county identify at least one major merger, consolidation, shared service or smart growth initiative that is either already underway or can be initiated in the year 2007. While all local government leaders should participate in this task, county leaders should coordinate the identification of these initiatives. After reviewing the initiatives submitted from local government leaders throughout the state, the staff of the Commission and an interagency task force, described below, will select the proposals which they deem most substantial, innovative and hold the greatest promise for improving the efficiency and effectiveness of local government. For the selected projects, the task force will provide consultation and legal and logistical help using all state programs available. The task force can also provide help in obtaining any financial support currently available under programs such as the Shared Municipal Services Incentive. One task of the Commission will be to assess the effectiveness of such programs

¹ A roster of Commissioners and the Executive Order are enclosed.

and to recommend their expansion or alteration and the establishment of other financial incentives for local governments to merge, consolidate, partner in the delivery of services and adopt smart growth practices.

I am directing every agency of State government with relevant jurisdiction and expertise to participate in the interagency task force and assist in the implementation of the chosen initiatives, including the Department of State, the Empire State Development Corporation, the Office of Real Property Services, the Governor's Office of Regulatory Reform, the Division of the Budget and the State Education Department. Comptroller DiNapoli has also promised to lend the support of his local government office to this effort.

Many local governments are already pursuing initiatives in this area, or are actively discussing potential initiatives. However, we want to assist in the identification and facilitation of new programs. Regional initiatives extending beyond county borders are encouraged. This request and the process we will be carrying out should not limit you to one project. However, I ask that at least one be identified which is in progress or can begin in the near future.

By identifying these projects now and allowing the State to help local officials in their implementation, the work of the Commission will be supplemented and improved through access to a process in which real world initiatives are pushed forward with all the tools currently at the State's disposal. We will also gain important knowledge about which tools don't work, which need to be refined and which new tools need to be developed, so that the State can assist local government in improving the lives and commercial opportunities of New York's residents and businesses.

I request that these major initiatives be identified at the county level, and sent to the office of the Executive Director of the Local Government Commission via writing or email by June 15th, 2007. Please address all submissions and questions to:

Email: localgov@empire.state.ny.us
Address: NYS Commission on Local Government
Efficiency and Competitiveness
Executive Director
30 South Pearl Street
Albany, NY 12245
Telephone: (518) 292-5139
Website: www.nyslocalgov.org

I know that you will join me and other local government officials in your counties in this important effort to provide all New Yorkers with the best, most efficient and most competitive local government that our committed and collective efforts can provide. I thank you for your cooperation in this vital work on behalf of the people of New York State.

Sincerely,



ELIOT SPITZER