

League of Women Voters of Westchester
Statement on 2018 Proposed Westchester County Budget

November 30, 2017

Addressed to Westchester County Board of Legislators

The League of Women Voters of Westchester wishes to comment on the proposed 2018 County Budget. We thank Budget Director Larry Soule for having met with us both informally and then at a public meeting the League held at the Scarsdale Public Library on November 17th, when he provided needed information and insights.

The 2018 proposed budget, like the 2017 proposed budget, is not balanced. The Westchester Airport privatization deal has not been finalized and the "wished for" thirty million dollars of revenue from this deal should not have been plugged into the budget.

This is the third year in a row that the League of Women Voters has called for a tax increase. The County could remain well under the two percent cap and still provide extra monies that would close the budget imbalance and allow many aspects of the proposed budget to remain in place.

The people of Westchester are not being well served by this proposed budget.

By following a "no tax increase" strategy, our County's investment in people and hard assets has been drastically cut, hence mortgaging our future:

- Deferred maintenance increases future repair or replacement costs.
- Lack of good faith negotiations with unions have resulted in the risk of future large settlements (CSEA settlement is estimated at \$40M, Corrections at \$5M).
- If the proposed contract for management of the County airport is not approved, reserves would need to be used to cover the shortfall (most likely \$15M will be needed for 2017 and perhaps \$30M in 2018). This could put our credit rating in danger, making debt to address the above problems more expensive.

By following a "no tax increase" strategy the County's level of service to its citizens has and will continue to erode. Example:

- The Planning, Public Works, Parks and Recreation and Public Safety departments need to be fully staffed to achieve needed flood mitigation, road and bridge repairs and safety of our residents

The next administration should not be shy about proposing a tax increase. The County provides "added value" for all who reside and work in Westchester. That story needs to be told.

Respectfully Submitted by,

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