



News From

Maggie Brooks

Monroe County Executive

For Immediate Release

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2007 State of the County Address

"A New Generation of Innovators and Entrepreneurs"

Monroe County Executive Maggie Brooks

Monday, February 26, 2007 - - 7:00 p.m.

Thank you, and good evening.

Before I begin, I would like to ask everyone to bow their heads in a moment of silence to honor the brave men and women who are serving our nation overseas, and to honor our County's military heroes who have paid the ultimate sacrifice during the past year. They are:

Tech Sergeant Timothy Weiner of Fairport

1st Lieutenant James Lyons of Brighton

And Specialist Teodoro Torres, Jr. of Rochester

Thank you.

I would also like to thank Medical Specialist Sylvester Thomas and Sergeant Autrey Robinson for leading us in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Monroe County owes a great debt to our veterans, for service and sacrifice to protect our freedoms and secure our nation. Our active military personnel and our nation's veterans represent the very best in our community.

These American heroes include the following County employees who have served in Iraq and Afghanistan over the past year.

Master Sergeant Marvin DiPolato of our Sheriff's Office

Sergeant James Hoyle of our Sheriff's Office

Master Sergeant Charles Lane of the Parks Department

Captain Eric Lanpher of our Sheriff's Office

Sergeant Timothy Walton of the Department of Transportation

And Staff Sergeant Stephen Worden of the Sheriff's Office

Thank you.

President Zyra, Majority Leader Smith, Assistant Minority Leaders Bronson and Lee, Sheriff O'Flynn, County Clerk Dinolfo, District Attorney Green, Mayor Duffy, Chairman Minarik, Chairman Cook, Chairman Colon, distinguished guests, friends, and my fellow Monroe County taxpayers....

More than thirty-five years ago, the proud son of Sicilian Immigrants began a journey in search of the American dream. A graduate of Alfred and a one-time teller at the old Lincoln First Bank, he had achieved some success publishing a bidders guide for local companies.

However, this visionary did not rest on his laurels. He knew that our region and our nation were entering into a new age...where technology would play an unprecedented role in the way we would do business.

And that is why in 1971, B. Thomas Golisano tapped the emerging market potential for small-to-midsize companies by starting Paychex.

More than thirty-five years later, all of us have witnessed the extraordinary results of Tom Golisano's vision and hard work.

Paychex is one of our country's greatest success stories. It is rated by Fortune Magazine as one of the best companies to work for in America, and one of the most admired.

Paychex is also a Monroe County success story...offering more than 2,800 local employees their own chance to pursue the American dream.

And Paychex is the symbol of our County's ongoing efforts to develop a new generation of entrepreneurs...and grow our innovation economy.

I would like to personally thank Chief Executive Officer Jonathan Judge and Board of Directors Chair Tom Golisano for their hospitality tonight, for their service to our community and for their commitment to and investment in our local economy.

And I would like to thank Laura Saxby Lynch for all she has done to make tonight's event possible. Laura, thank you.

I would also like to express my gratitude to all of you...the taxpayers of Monroe County...for the incredible honor of serving as your County Executive.

In three years, we have sparked a fundamental change in the way our County does business.

We have established partnerships igniting a new wave of bi-partisan collaboration.

We have governed with civility and respect.

We have taken bold steps to move our community from crisis to stability.

And tonight I can stand before you and safely say the state of our County continues to grow stronger every day.

Our region's economy is moving in a positive direction...with job gains now outnumbering job losses.

Monroe County's unemployment rate is now at its lowest point in five years.

Our housing market continues to grow, with residents young and old, accessing high quality, affordable housing.

Our Greater Rochester International Airport is experiencing record growth.

Visitors are traveling to our region in rapidly-growing numbers, and tourism continues to serve as an important economic engine...generating more than \$800 million dollars for our County's economy

And, despite a few snow flurries, our quality of life continues to be second to none.

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My administration's laser-like focus on creating new jobs and growing our economy will continue to be a priority in the upcoming year

In 1980 there were 330,000 jobs in Monroe County. That was a time when employment at Eastman Kodak was at its peak, and manufacturing was our community's bread and butter.

Despite dramatic corporate restructuring since that time, the job count today for this County is 382,000. This is job growth at three times the growth of population – an economic trend that is upward, not downward.

We must continue to focus our efforts on growing small and midsize companies, where 90 percent of our job growth is occurring.

Over the last three years, my administration has helped 385 companies improve and expand their local operations.

These companies are creating 6,900 new jobs, retaining over 28,000 jobs, and investing more than one billion dollars in our local economy.

We continue to lead our two largest neighboring counties, Erie and Onondaga, in employment growth.

However, we must continue to offer the training needed to make sure our workers can compete in this rapidly-changing global economy.

Through our partnership with RochesterWorks, we helped more than 13,000 individuals secure new jobs in the past year.

By launching initiatives such as the Hiring Incentive Grant program, we have provided two million dollars for skilled worker training. In fact, programs like this have helped 2,200 local employers, including 430 for the first time.

The federal government has also recognized and rewarded the promise of the Western New York economy. As a member of the Finger Lakes Partnership, Monroe County is working to enhance the skills of our job force, through the WIRED initiative.

Our region was one of only 13 areas of the country to receive this three-year, \$15 million dollar grant, part of a bold initiative to create sustainable programs for the 21st century economy.

Monroe County continues to be well-positioned to lead the economic revitalization of Western New York. And we have many great success stories to tell.

Impact Technologies, a research and development contractor for the defense industry is investing one million dollars, and creating 50 new high-tech jobs. The company decided to expand here over their other locations in Pennsylvania and Georgia.

CURRENT Communications, a broadband service provider, expanded into a new facility and will create 180 new jobs. The project represents a ten million dollar investment in the community.

Getinge, the world's leading manufacturer of medical sterilization equipment, will invest five million dollars to modernize and renovate their manufacturing and distribution facilities in Henrietta. We are the U.S. headquarters for this company. This project will help retain 265 local jobs.

Cryovac, which makes the plastic packaging for the food products you buy in the supermarket, is investing sixteen million dollars to expand its facility in Gates. 50 new jobs will be created, 121 existing jobs retained.

HF Technologies, a manufacturer of components used in business machines, decided to close its Beijing, China operation and bring 76 jobs to the City of Rochester. Yes, you heard that right...jobs coming from China to Monroe County.

Arnold Magnetic Technologies, a local manufacturer that has operations worldwide is investing \$2.6 million to expand its operations in Pittsford, creating 50 new manufacturing jobs.

Pictometry, the world leader in digital, oblique aerial imaging and measuring software, is investing ten million dollars in the local economy, and creating 20 new jobs.

And RadNet, a diagnostic imaging company, is moving a portion of their Los Angeles, California operations to Perinton, creating 36 new jobs.

Why this momentum? Companies will tell you that our highly skilled workforce is at the top of the list.

I also believe that the tireless efforts of our Economic Development staff are a close second.

Every day our team of economic development professionals reaches out to offer support and assistance to the many companies keeping our community strong. I'd like to thank Judy Seil and her team for their efforts.

Tonight, I am proud to announce the Monroe Manufacturing Rewards Program, a new initiative designed to assist small businesses, specifically, small manufacturers, purchase the equipment they need to stay competitive.

Manufacturing remains an important and viable industry in our community. Our new Rewards Program will provide assistance to manufacturing companies purchasing from \$25,000 up to \$50,000 in equipment.

As a result, we will help 200 small manufacturers in our County expand their operations and create more jobs.

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We must also recognize that a strong and stable economy is dependent upon successful efforts to attract outside investment so we can grow our tax base. New wealth means new jobs.

Last December, the Monroe County IDA pledged a \$300,000 investment to Greater Rochester Enterprise. The money will enable GRE to take marketing and business attraction activities to a new level.

It's an investment in our future and underscores the importance of public sector partnership with private economic development agencies like GRE. Our ability to compete on a national and global level requires a coordinated, team approach.

Joining us tonight are two people who share my resolve to create new jobs and grow our local economy. Dennis Mullen, President and CEO of GRE, and Theresa Mazzullo, Chairman of COMIDA. Thank you both for coming.

Our partnership with GRE was an important step forward in streamlining our community's economic development efforts and enabling us to speak with one voice. But we can do even better. I am working with our partners on a coordinated plan to bring our community's economic development efforts together under one roof... for true one stop shopping. To build on our success and create more jobs, we must better align our resources and make it easier for companies to locate and grow here in Monroe County.

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The landscape of Monroe County's history is dotted with great critical thinkers and visionaries, such as John Jacob Bausch, George Eastman, Robert Wegman, and Tom Golisano.

In 2007, we are very much an idea and innovation capital. Monroe County has the assets and resources to support emerging technologies and grow the industries of the future.

It was President Ronald Reagan who said, "We in government should learn to look at our country with the eyes of the entrepreneur, seeing possibilities where others see only problems."

In Monroe County, we have clearly heeded that call.

The Entrepreneurs Network, or TEN is a shining and successful example of our leadership in tapping the entrepreneurial spirit. TEN is the first program of its kind in Upstate New York.

Classes meet twice a month for six months and interact directly with top local and national experts. The program provides the resources and information needed to help entrepreneurs take their companies to the next level.

The Entrepreneurs Network has already helped 18 early-stage, high-tech companies and is now working with its second class of 16 entrepreneurs from across our region.

After being a part of our inaugural TEN class, Logical Images received \$2.7 million in venture financing and will create up to 30 new jobs.

House Digital built relationships with local and regional home builders and added three full-time employees.

ICS Telecom secured a \$50 million multi-year contract with the Department of Justice to take Voice-over-Internet Protocol nationwide.

Entrepreneurship and innovation are the economic engines that are powering the Upstate New York economy. The TEN program is proving to be important fuel in this activity.

In August of last year, our community celebrated an important economic victory when we announced that health care management company CareGuide decided to move a majority of its Florida operations...and some of its Texas and Nevada operations to Monroe County.

CareGuide currently employs 42 people in our county and will be creating 200 new jobs, and investing eleven million dollars as they expand their local operations.

My Brands, a woman-owned small business contracts with many of the largest consumer packaged goods companies in the United States and sells hard-to-find products to brand loyal customers via the telephone and Internet.

Monroe County helped My Brands launch its operations in 2001 on a shoe-string budget and with just two employees.

Six years later, this successful company employs 13 people and Monroe County has helped My Brands with the purchase of more than \$200,000 in equipment.

ePostmarks was founded in September 2002 by two young entrepreneurs to address the increasing demand for trust in email. The company's innovative technology brings the authority and assurance of the U.S. Postal Service to your email.

ePostmarks is creating 6 new jobs this year, and is also planning to employ several co-ops from local universities. They are an inaugural member of The Entrepreneurs Network, and through the program, ePostmarks secured commitments for their initial funding round.

These are the type of success stories we need to duplicate to create more jobs, remain on the cutting-edge of technology and innovation, and enable our region to compete more effectively in the global economy.

We welcome tonight the individuals behind these successful local companies:

Kent Tapper, Vice President of Finance for CareGuide;

Laurie Twombly, Executive Vice President of My Brands;

And Jason Curtis, CEO of ePostmarks

Thank you for your confidence and belief in our County and our region.

Some of the other graduates and current members of TEN have joined us this evening. I applaud their entrepreneurial spirit and their commitment to growing their companies here, in Monroe County and Upstate New York.

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As we celebrate those companies that put Monroe County on the map we certainly cannot overlook a cluster that has truly become an economic driver for our region.

With a four billion dollar impact on the area economy, higher education is a core industry. In fact, the University of Rochester is now Monroe County's largest employer.

Our colleges and universities are shaping our economic landscape more than ever before.

And we are engaging these institutions as we never have before.

Last December, I convened Monroe County's first College Presidents Summit, and asked these leaders to help define a vision and priorities for our region.

The summit was a success and we have used that milestone event as a starting point for further collaboration.

Recently, we unveiled our first partnership, the launch of the Biz2Edu website.

This online gateway connects businesses, site selectors, economic development specialists, and others with the multitude of resources available at our academic institutions.

I want to specifically acknowledge COMIDA, and thank Senator Joe Robach, Assemblyman Bill Reilich and Assemblyman Joe Errigo for securing the funding to make the launch of the web-site possible.

This is just the beginning and one example of what opportunity will come from our partnership with the consortium of Rochester Area Colleges.

Under the leadership of Chairman Chris Dahl, President of SUNY Geneseo, and in cooperation with the City of Rochester, we are working on several action items that will build a stronger bridge between higher education, business and government.

The leadership of our college presidents will be a pivotal part of our efforts to create a sustainable roadmap for the future...and joining us tonight are two of these leaders...University of Rochester President Joel Seligman and Monroe Community College President Tom Flynn. I want to thank Joel, Tom and all of our college Presidents for their vision and leadership.

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Those of us with young adults in our families understand the challenge of keeping young talent in Monroe County.

Our best defense against the “brain drain”? We must continue to encourage entrepreneurship, innovation, and provide access to high-quality, good-paying jobs.

Created through the vision of PAETEC Chairman and CEO Arunas Chesonis, ROC City Coalition serves as the umbrella organization for young professional groups in our area. The coalition has more than 4,000 members and is a powerful partner in activities designed to connect young talent with local employers looking for skilled and educated workers.

My administration has made it a priority to retain as much youth and energy as we possibly can. To that end I will be appointing a County liaison to ROC City Coalition. This liaison will report directly to me on issues important to young professionals and will work with ROC City to form a community-wide strategy to make Monroe County a place of opportunity for those under the age of 40.

Jeremy Cooney, the Chair of ROC City Coalition, has joined us tonight, and I’d like to recognize him for the great work of his organization.

Young people are attracted to an innovation economy. And we must do everything in our power to give our young talent the tools they need to become the innovators and entrepreneurs of tomorrow.

That is why I am pleased to announce that Monroe County is working with Frontier to develop a wireless internet network that will serve significant portions of Greece, Pittsford and the City of Rochester...as well as portions of the surrounding towns by the end of the year.

In addition, Frontier has also agreed to develop free wireless internet zones within this network...a critical step in our County’s efforts to bridge the digital divide.

We anticipate this wireless network will continue to expand throughout other parts of the County...and eventually become a full-scale, wireless network to serve all County residents.

Our new partnership with Frontier is a win for our taxpayers, and a win for our community. The new network will be created at no cost to taxpayers, and will soon allow our community to reap the benefits of wireless access to the information superhighway.

I would like to recognize Ann Burr, Senior Vice President and General Manager of Frontier for joining us tonight. Ann, thank you.

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Our future leaders are not only found in the halls of our fine colleges and universities or the many incubators sprouting throughout our great County.

They are also apprentice tradesmen and tradeswomen who are offering their muscle, their sweat, and their boundless energy to keeping our economy moving forward.

That is why it is crucial that we continue to support our local labor force and ensure that County-supported projects are constructed using local labor.

When I ran for County Executive four years ago, I pledged that my first action in office would be to add a 100% local labor requirement to projects supported by COMIDA. That promise is now our County's practice.

Despite some well-publicized bumps in the road, jobs for local labor have increased by 8% over the past two years as a result of our policy. I continue to believe that despite any barriers we must do everything in our power to support local jobs and Monroe County's working families.

That will remain my commitment going forward.

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The innovative spirit isn't just something government can support. Monroe County government is leading through example.

In recent months my administration has rolled out a series of initiatives designed to promote renewable energy, protect our natural environment and protect our taxpayers at the same time.

These commitments could not come at a more critical time in our region and our nation's history. We all know too well that we cannot sustain our nation's dependence on foreign oil.

The record prices we pay at the gas pump and the depletion of our nation's petroleum reserves have forced this country into a long-overdue conversation on alternative energy development.

But while others are just talking, our County has taken strong action. In the past three years, we have become a state leader in the development of green energy resources.

We have saved local taxpayers \$400,000 each year by installing new energy-efficient bulbs in County traffic lights.

We are opening an E-85 fueling station on Scottsville Road, and a significant portion of our County's vehicle fleet will use ethanol-based fuel.

We have entered into an agreement with Rochester Midland Corporation to purchase and use only green janitorial products in our County's facilities.

We have taken steps to educate our young people on the benefits of renewable energy and have created a scouting patch to recognize local scouts for promoting recycling.

And we will start power production at Riga's Mill Seat Landfill this spring capturing methane gas now being released into the air, turning waste into watts of low-cost energy for the benefit of local residents.

Our hard work has paid off, and our cutting edge efforts have been recognized and applauded.

This year, I received the Elected Officials award from the American Public Works Association and the New York Water Environmental Association in recognition of Monroe County's energy and environmental conservation program.

The New York Power Authority has recognized innovation at the Mill Seat Landfill and recently rewarded Monroe County with a state grant and low-interest financing of the power-generation facility.

The Power Authority has also agreed to partner with Monroe County, as we conduct energy audits of our County-owned facilities.

And thanks to our development of the Mill Seat Landfill and the closing of our incinerators at the Van Lare Treatment Plant, we have been recognized by the State DEC for removing 280 tons of sulfur dioxide that had previously inundated the air we breathe...and the water we drink.

In November, I proposed that our County achieve a 10% reduction in energy costs within four years.

Tonight, I am proud to announce that we will be achieving that goal in half the time.

Thanks to the hard work of the Department of Environmental Services, under the leadership of John Graham, and their partners, Monroe County will be able to cut our energy consumption by 10% in two years...and will save County taxpayers \$1.7 million dollars in the process.

In addition, I am pleased to announce that both Renaissance Square and Monroe County's new Crime Lab will be green buildings...the very first green facilities constructed through our County government.

I also have some exciting news.

Just as we have worked to create watts from waste at the Mill Seat Landfill, and offer our community a new renewable energy resource, Monroe County is working with High Falls Brewery to create a second innovative renewable energy resource that will protect local jobs, protect taxpayers, and protect our environment.

Tonight, I am pleased to announce that Monroe County will be working with High Falls Brewery to create a new research and production facility at that site which will convert waste streams produced by the Brewery into low-cost ethanol.

This new facility will produce nearly 300,000 gallons of ethanol on an annual basis, and will create efficiencies and reduce operational costs for both the brewery and our Pure Waters Van Lare treatment plant.

In addition, the ethanol produced through this new initiative will be used in County-owned vehicles, with any excess being made available for public purchase through E85 ethanol pumps under development at our Scottsville Road Fleet Center.

High Falls Brewery is the home to more than 400 hard-working employees, and joining us tonight is John Henderson, the President and Chief Operating Officer of High Falls Brewery. I'd like to thank John for his commitment to our community's future.

Any discussion of our community's future must also focus on positive youth development, and providing our children with a safe and secure environment to grow into our next generation of innovators and entrepreneurs.

We have already received national recognition for our commitment to asset building and positive youth development. In addition, the Search Institute has chosen Monroe County to host the 2007 Healthy Communities/Healthy Youth Conference...a conference that will bring more than a thousand visitors to our community.

And to further our commitment to our children, tonight I am announcing five new initiatives.

First, I will be asking our Juvenile Justice Council to develop an "Alternatives for Youth Program"...one geared to prevent children from entering the family court system and being institutionalized in costly settings. This program will compliment our redesigned PINS program which is already positively impacting families throughout our community.

Second, I will recommend to our Juvenile Justice Council the establishment of a new, county-wide Youth Court system by the end of this year.

Youth Courts will be utilized for some first-time, non-violent youthful offenders, who have been charged with minor offenses, and have agreed to accept punishment administered by their peers. These courts offer participants a new chance to make a positive impact, while reducing taxpayer costs by relieving court backlogs.

Third, I will be working with our Juvenile Justice Council to convene a summit of parents, students, teachers, school administrators and law enforcement professionals this summer to address the growing epidemic of cyber-bullying. Our children must never feel threatened or intimidated in their schools or in their homes...and we must do whatever it takes to protect our children from this emerging threat.

Fourth, our County has created an on-line guide for parents to help their children navigate the information superhighway safely and securely. It is now on our website at monroecounty.gov, and available for parents to immediately use to help protect their children.

And fifth, I will be unveiling our community's "Prom Promise" safety campaign in April designed to promote parental awareness of the dangers faced by our children on prom night. This campaign is a matter close to my heart.

My daughter Jensen is a senior in high school, and will be attending her prom this spring. I have spoken with her about making the right choices, and I will be doing everything in my power as a parent to ensure that she will be able to enjoy a safe and memorable prom night.

Through the "Prom Promise" campaign, we will make sure all parents in our community have access to the information they need to ensure their own children's safety on their special night.

There is nothing more important than protecting the safety and security of our children, and I look forward to working with all of you on this critical mission in the weeks and months ahead.

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It certainly is no accident that we have successfully fostered a climate that rewards innovation and encourages entrepreneurship.

And that is why it is important to continue a sound, fiscally conservative approach to governing in Monroe County.

Since I took office in 2004 my administration has reigned in County government spending and demonstrated fiscal restraint. That conservative approach to budgeting has achieved impressive results.

First, I have repeatedly said “no” to raising your property taxes, and have successfully held the property tax rate flat at \$9.10.

The biggest issue every County in New York State is facing is rising property taxes. School taxes, which make up 60% of the bill we pay, seem to go up each year. County taxes make up about 20% of our bills, with town and village taxes making up the rest. All combined create an enormous strain on our County’s property taxpayers.

If property taxes keep rising, we will lose jobs, investment, and people. Our quality of life will not be sustainable.

Every year since taking office I’ve presented a balanced budget to our legislature. Those budgets have kept spending below the rate of inflation. In fact in 2007 non-mandated spending was reduced by 400-thousand dollars.

Every year I have provided an operational blueprint that has cut costs while maintaining a high level of service.

In partnership with our unions we’ve achieved \$51.8 million in employee wage and benefit cost savings for taxpayers.

Our County’s workforce has been reduced more than 11%.

We’ve consolidated operations in Parks, Transportation and Environmental Services...saving Monroe County taxpayers more than \$1 million per year.

We’ve worked with Excellus to reduce health care costs by \$22 million dollars.

We’ve in-sourced Foster Care Services...saving Monroe County Taxpayers close to \$3 million since 2005.

In 2007 we will take several new aggressive steps to control spending for taxpayers.

Our Purchasing Department is implementing new performance standards to measure the cost-effectiveness of outside contracts.

In 2007, we estimate that our County will enter into purchase contracts...totaling nearly \$65 million dollars. This year we will also enter into service contracts, in an amount exceeding \$183 million dollars.

We want the best value for your tax dollars. That is why the implementation of these performance standards is a natural extension of our commitment to ensure vendor accountability, and will allow us to invest in evidence-based programs and services. Even though the majority of our County’s budget is mandated, the cost of providing the mandated services is not.

This year we will also be implementing a wellness program for County employees. This is expected to save taxpayers approximately \$500,000, and will improve employee productivity, promote healthy living and further reduce health care costs for the County.

But despite our innovative spirit and all of our cost cutting and streamlining efforts, Monroe County continues to struggle with an annual budget shortfall of \$45-million dollars.

The reason is simple. 79% of our budget is controlled by Washington and Albany. 79% of our revenue is used to pay for programs required by the federal and state government, but with little or no local authority to control their rising cost.

Governor Spitzer has said, quote “we need government that is a catalyst for change instead of an impediment.”

To achieve his goal of “One New York”, Albany must recognize that, if left unchecked, upstate counties will go bankrupt under the burden of unfunded mandates...and the continued growth of the Medicaid program.

This year we will expand our efforts to reduce waste, fraud and abuse within our Medicaid program.

And we will continue to lobby for reform of this costly program in Albany.

But we can also be an effective partner with Albany...an incubator for reform to protect our property taxpayers. I have expressed this to Governor Spitzer’s team, and I look forward to working with them in the months and years to come.

I am fortunate to work with dedicated and committed leaders in our villages and towns...Republican and Democrat alike.

And in the City of Rochester, my relationship with Mayor Bob Duffy has been defined by constant communication and mutual respect. He is here tonight, and I’d like to recognize him for his valued partnership.

I understand the challenges the City faces, and I remain steadfast in support of the Mayor’s goal of increased State aid...and fiscal parity with the cities of Buffalo and Syracuse.

And I know that Mayor Duffy understands the crippling Medicaid burden placed on our County’s taxpayers, and my genuine desire to protect our government partners as we craft a long-term solution to our County’s structural deficit.

Here at home, we, as a County, continue to be generous in our revenue sharing with all our government partners.

Under the landmark Morin-Ryan sales tax sharing agreement, later amended by an agreement between former County Executive Doyle and Mayor Johnson, Monroe County shares its sales tax equally with the City of Rochester. This provided our City with over \$120 million dollars in revenue during the year 2006.

And our generosity extends to our other government partners as well. In 2006, Monroe County provided \$55.4 million to our school districts, \$80.2 million to our towns, and \$8.6 million to our villages.

Monroe County has more intermunicipal agreements than any other county in the State, and pays for the maintenance and operation of many collaborative initiatives like the 9-1-1 Center, the Public Safety Crime Lab and the Public Safety Training facility. We pay the Medicaid, safety net and welfare costs for the entire community,

Leadership means doing the right thing, simply because it is the right thing to do. And I believe our historic generosity is the right thing.

But make no mistake about it...that generosity does not come without a price. And in 2007, that price tag will force us to make some very tough decisions.

It will be a challenge but also an opportunity.

Let the result stand as yet another example of our community's innovative leadership and collaborative success.

From government to business to higher education there is a new forward-thinking energy in our region.

There is renewed optimism that Monroe County is moving in the right direction.

Let 2007 be the year we celebrate all that we have and boast about all that we are.

From Hamlin to Henrietta, from Wheatland to Webster, from Parma to Perinton we are a community rich with parkland, farmland, and glorious shorelines and trails.

We have vibrant destinations like the George Eastman House, Strong National Museum of Play, Seneca Park Zoo and Wegmans.

We are a center for history with roots connecting us to Susan B Anthony and Frederick Douglass.

We are known for our entertainment and culture and names like Chuck and Gap Mangione, Mitch Miller, Jeff Tyzik and Garth Fagan.

We are home to the Buffalo Bills training camp, and one of the best minor league sports towns in the country thanks to teams like the Red Wings, Amerks, and Rhinos.

We are the home of J-Mac, lilacs, the garbage plate, white hots, and frozen custard.

We are an annual stop for the LPGA, the Nationwide Tour, and USA Hockey.

From sports, to jazz to film to food, let 2007 be the launch of a new “Monroe County on the Map” campaign...a partnership between the County and our community to showcase all things local.

I believe we can change our future by changing our attitude, and recognizing an opportunity in every challenge.

Let this be the year we challenge the naysayers to speak with pride about our hometown.

Let this be the year we all become believers...and see our true potential and the promise of our future.

And let 2007 be the year when we build on our heritage of innovation and entrepreneurship...and extend our legacy of collaboration, service and success.

For as President Reagan wisely said...we are the showcase of the future...and it can be as grand...and as great as we make it.

Thank you.