



NEWS FROM THE OFFICE OF
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

A CULTURE OF CHANGE
The First 500 Days of the Office of Ulster County Comptroller

KINGSTON, NY (June 1, 2010)... January 1, 2009 not only ushered in a new form of government in Ulster County, it also marked the beginning of Comptroller Elliott Auerbach's effort to create an independent agency of the people serving to protect the public's interest.

"May 16th marked the 500th day of our new form of government here in Ulster County," said the county's first comptroller. It is a milestone for responsive and responsible government and we wanted to document the culture of change and use this indicator to look back, catalog our successes and track our thresholds" explained Auerbach.

"500 Days of Accountability" is a comprehensive report of initiatives and outcomes the Comptroller has compiled that signifies the efforts he and his staff have undertaken to discover and report on the economy, efficiency and effectiveness with which County government is run.

"We began our first few months authoring two reports on internal control practices within the County. That analysis identified several deficiencies, including a flawed financial management and reporting system. In addition, it brought to the surface the need to protect County staff with whistleblower protections, which the legislature subsequently acted upon" said Auerbach.

"We reviewed and improved the claims auditing function by which my staff serves as the last line of defense in assuring only valid, authorized claims are paid," said Auerbach, "as a result I reinstated the use of claimant certifications to create an additional layer of accountability."

The "500 Days" report lists a range of issued audits and reports from small cash counts to the massive review of the Ulster County Department of Health. "Our analysis of the Department of Health identified broad opportunities for improved processes and controls," said Auerbach, "it also swept out from under the carpet the long-known need for control over nepotism – family hiring and working for family." That report revealed how seriously dysfunctional government can become when a husband/wife team had unfettered control within the public domain.

"In this position it pays to remain dexterous," said Auerbach, "like cautioning a legislative committee not to allocate funds of tens of thousands of dollars for a convicted killer's medical bills without a full audit of the charges."

The mission of the Ulster County Comptroller's Office is to serve as an independent agency of the people and to protect the public interest by monitoring County government and to assess and report on the degree to which its operation is economical, efficient and its financial condition sound.

As a result of creating a Comptroller's Blog, Auerbach has had real-time communication with taxpayers. His fraud prevention workshop for not-for-profit organizations was well received and Auerbach said his Comptroller's Advisory Committee has challenged him to ask new and different questions of County operations.

"Because we pull back the curtain to let the light shine on County government," said Auerbach, "I established heightened ethics standards for my staff. It is our job to reveal the facts, not spin them."

Elliott Auerbach is the first elected Comptroller in Ulster County. **500 Days of Accountability** can be found on the Comptroller's website at www.ulstercountyny.gov/resources/comptroller

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