



# NEWS FROM THE ULSTER COUNTY COMPTROLLER

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## BATTLING THE ILL-EFFECTS OF NEPOTISM

### COMPTROLLER CREDITS CHAIRMAN AND EXECUTIVE

KINGSTON, NY (February 1, 2010) ... Ulster County Comptroller Elliott Auerbach lauded the actions of the County's Executive and Legislative Chairman as they proceed on parallel fronts to protect the County from the ill-effects of nepotism. "When individuals supervise people within their own family," said Auerbach, "the potential for favoritism is a risk not worth taking with public projects or funds."

In his November 2009 report, "Ill Heath," the Comptroller found that the familial relationship between the former director of public health and his wife/administrative assistant had the effect of exempting his wife from standard operating procedures required of other employees.

"As we pulled back the curtain to understand and report on what had transpired within the Ulster County Health Department over the past fifteen years," explained Auerbach, "we found that, due to nepotism, the department operated as private, family business and administered County business without essential internal controls." "It was said succinctly in our report that **employees in familial relationships ought not to work within the same department and division, especially in a supervisor/staff relationship,**" the Comptroller pointed out.

Since then, Ulster County Executive Michael Hein issued an executive order requiring all department heads as well as board, agency and commission heads under his jurisdiction to review their operations for any nepotism-related conflicts and report to him within 60 days findings based on their review.

In a parallel action, Frederick Wadnola, Chairman of the Ulster County Legislature, requested that the standing committee on Government Operations and Efficiency undertake a complete review of the personnel policy. The review will include questions of nepotism or the appearance of family-related conflicts in County employment.

"I am pleased to see this bi-cameral, bi-partisan approach to solving a problem that has adversely affected the County for more than a decade," said Auerbach. "Just as we saw with the success of the Whistleblower Law, when we all focus on what is best for the people of Ulster County we can achieve across any real or perceived line of division," commented Auerbach.

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*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.*