



NEWS FROM THE ULSTER COUNTY COMPTROLLER

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COMPTROLLER FINDS OPPORTUNITY FOR IMPROVEMENT

Internal Controls Baseline Report Issued

KINGSTON, NY (March 25, 2009)...Ulster Comptroller Elliott Auerbach today issued a report, ***Internal Controls Baseline Report***, *A Survey of Ulster County Government's Compliance with the New York State Standards of Internal Control*, that reveals a great deal about how Ulster County governmental operations protect County resources and safeguard against loss due to waste, abuse, mismanagement, errors and frauds.

"We surveyed departments to establish a baseline of internal control measures against which future progress can be gauged," explained Comptroller Auerbach, "and as a means to identify areas to strengthen so County activities go according to plan and success can be achieved. I thank everyone who completed the survey."

"Most importantly," said Auerbach, "survey responses indicate that an internal control environment exists and indicate there is a management philosophy and style rooted in high expectations regarding integrity and ethical values." Nonetheless, the range of responses to the 50 question survey indicates there is room for improvement across all aspects of internal control.

Auerbach sees the 'room for improvement' findings as an opportunity. "Internal control is a dynamic system of promoting orderly, economical, efficient and effective operations," explains the Comptroller. "We now have a new system of government in Ulster County and this is an opportune time to institute changes from past practices. Finding room for improvement gives further impetus for effecting meaningful change," opined Auerbach.

The Report's summary recommendations suggest the County Executive develop a continuing education program for staff at all levels of service and that the Legislature adopt 'whistleblower' legislation to protect people who report suspected improprieties. As for the Comptroller, he will invite NYS Comptroller Thomas DiNapoli to provide an orientation program on the scope and implementation of control activities.

"The greatest thing I'd like people to take away from this report, though, is that individuals at all levels of County government have a responsibility for internal control," said Auerbach, "as I've heard Bob Edgar of Common Cause say, 'We are the leaders we've been waiting for'."

The report follows a previously issued white paper entitled, ***Ensuring 'Good Things' Happen and 'Bad Things' Don't***, *A White Paper on Improving Internal Control in Ulster County's New Charter Form of Government* which introduces the concepts and activities of internal control and demonstrates how they relate to the legislative, executive and comptroller functions of the new Ulster County government. Both reports can be found at www.co.ulster.ny.us/comptroller.
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