

Ulster County Executive Mike Hein and Dutchess County Executive Marcus Molinaro Announce Agreement to Provide Reciprocal Conflict Defender Services

By partnering, the counties expect to save more than \$300,000 a year for their combined taxpayers

Kingston, NY - Today Ulster County Executive Mike Hein and Dutchess County Executive Marc Molinaro jointly announced a shared services agreement between the two counties to address the soaring, state mandated costs of providing legal defense counsel to indigent clients. The County Executives have forged a cooperative agreement to garner a level of cost containment over a State mandated expense that has now reached a combined total of nearly \$3.9 million annually in Ulster and Dutchess counties, while maintaining high quality representation.



Left to right: Ulster County Attorney Beatrice Havranek, Dutchess County Executive Marc Molinaro, Ulster County Executive Mike Hein and Dutchess County Attorney James Fedorchak.

To date, when a Public Defender's Office is disqualified from representing an eligible indigent client due to a legal conflict, a private attorney is assigned. The attorney then bills the County according to rates established by New York State in a process referred to as "assigned counsel". The skyrocketing cost, coupled with decreased program aid from New York State, has placed a significant additional

burden on counties to cover the cost of this mandated service. In 2011, the system of providing representation cost Ulster County taxpayers \$1,345,653 while Dutchess County taxpayers spent \$2,540,000.

“Governments at every level must learn to work past political differences and municipal boundaries to focus on delivering results for the people. I am confident that the citizens of Ulster and Dutchess will benefit from this innovative collaboration,” said Ulster County Executive Hein.

County Executive Hein continued, “Not only does this pilot program represent a \$175,000 savings for Ulster County’s taxpayers, it represents a \$300,000 total savings for our region’s taxpayers, all while those in need continue to receive high quality legal representation. This is truly a win/win collaboration, and we both look forward to working our respective Legislatures to make it a reality.”

Dutchess County Executive Marc Molinaro said, “This agreement is the first of its kind in New York State for County Public Defender’s Offices and represents exactly the type of cooperative partnerships we need to embrace if we are to be successful in our efforts to deliver smaller, smarter government to our taxpayers. I am grateful to Public Defender Tom Angell for seeking out new and better ways to meet our residents’ needs, while reducing costs. We were very pleased to bring this plan to Ulster County and appreciate the support and cooperation of County Executive Hein to make this partnership a reality.”



Ulster County Public Defender Andrew Kossover added, "I want to thank both County Executive Hein and County Executive Molinaro for this innovative, cooperative approach to a fiscal problem that is plaguing counties throughout the State. I am excited to take part in this shared service arrangement, and look forward to working with Dutchess County's Public Defender Thomas Angell."

Dutchess County Public Defender Thomas Angell noted, "This new arrangement will permit each of our Public Defender Offices to create cost efficiencies while at the same time increasing the quality of legal services provided. I look forward to this new partnership with Ulster County Public Defender's Office. Our clients will better served by having access to full time defenders as well as the investigators, social workers and outside resources that our respective Public Defender Offices can provide."

The one year agreement unveiled today will be a pilot program in County Court, City of Kingston Court and Town of Ulster Court in Ulster County; and County Court and City of Poughkeepsie Court in Dutchess County.

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