



2011 STATE OF THE COUNTY ADDRESS
NASSAU COUNTY EXECUTIVE EDWARD P. MANGANO

April 11, 2011

Good evening Nassau County.

Let me first begin by acknowledging my colleagues who have joined us here today.

Presiding Officer Peter Schmitt, thank you for hosting today's State of the County along with Members of the Legislature.

Minority Leader Diane Yatauro, Comptroller George Maragos, County Clerk Maureen O'Connell and District Attorney Kathleen Rice, it's a pleasure to have you here. To the judges of our great County, it's an honor to join you this evening.

Welcome to a shining star in our County...Gold Coast Studios.

Joe and Glen LoStritto, thank you for making this facility available to us today. And Mike Manning, thank you for placing your movie and television show automobiles on display for us.

I would also like to thank the 11th NY Regiment US Volunteers for serving as our Color Guard.

My friends...we gather here today to discuss the State of our County, which is now in a state of repair.

I chose this location for a reason. At this studio, we create the future. We make dreams happen. We decide our destiny.

We are back.

After a decade of higher taxes, lavish spending and little reform, Nassau is now on the road to recovery because of the tough decisions made to take on the status quo.

Recovery can not occur overnight - but it will happen.

When I first took office as County Executive 15 months ago, I knew we had a tough road ahead. What I didn't know was that this County was in worse fiscal shape than anyone ever let on.

For too many years, Nassau ignored its future and settled for quick fixes rather than address the real underlying problems. This band-aid approach left our great County on life support.

Nassau like other counties and states is facing significant fiscal challenges; however, Nassau's challenges are amplified for several unique reasons.

First, our assessment system is unlike any assessment system in the country;

Second, our Sewer Authority is unlike any authority in the state;

And third, our County has played “kick-the-can” down the road with expensive labor contracts that taxpayers cannot afford.

That is why, early on, the Republican Legislature and I made the tough decisions needed to structurally improve our County finances while carving a path for its future.

While we could not solve all of the problems in one year, we made the tough decisions needed today to bring Nassau back to the great County it once was while fulfilling my pledges to:

- Freeze & Fix the broken Assessment System;
- Repeal the home energy tax;
- Cut wasteful spending; and
- Create jobs and opportunities

To understand why Nassau County's problems are amplified compared to neighboring counties, one must simply look at the broken assessment system.

Nassau County has stood alone in the State - being the only County to collect 17 cents on the dollar in taxes, yet return the whole dollar when an error is made.

Imagine having to return one dollar for every 17 cents received. There's a term for that:

Crazy!

This craziness has resulted in \$1.6 billion in debt and cost the average homeowner 10% more annually on their County tax bill.

That is why in 2010, the Republican Legislature and I acted to reform the way in which Nassau does business. We advanced reforms that will end the practice of borrowing against our children's future to pay tax refunds. Beginning in 2013, the County will no longer guarantee the refund of money it never received.

While we face the daunting task of fixing Nassau County's broken property tax assessment system, I stand before you today to say this is a challenge we are prepared to meet and have begun by correcting assessment errors before demanding payment.

For the first time ever, people that grieved their taxes and reached a settlement or judgment have seen that justice reflected in their assessment.

To provide assessment certainty for homeowners and businesses, Nassau moved from an annual assessment to a four-year cyclical assessment system. Westchester County announced it may soon follow suit to ensure assessment values remain the same for a four-year period.

In Nassau, these reforms will save hundreds of millions of dollars a year while protecting taxpayers and fulfilling my pledge to freeze and fix the broken assessment system.

Upon taking office, we also inherited a bankrupt Sewer Authority that provided free sewage treatment to select organizations.

Homeowners suffered as costs rose while others enjoyed a free ride.

At the end of the day, a business can't survive if it loses money. Well, neither can the Nassau County Sewer Authority.

That is why the Republican Legislature and I adopted a plan to close this multi-million dollar sewer deficit without balancing it on the shoulders of our homeowners.

Cleaning up this mess wasn't easy - no pun intended.

Together, these assessment and sewer reforms will help save Nassau County from fiscal insolvency in the years to come.

Unfortunately, the costs associated with their dysfunction, along with new pressures from the State and Federal government, contributed to the \$133 million deficit I faced upon taking office in January 2010.

I immediately responded by signing a law repealing the Home Energy Tax. A tax on everything and anything used to heat or cool your home; oil, gas, electricity and even firewood. My action fulfilled my pledge and reinforced my commitment to save taxpayer dollars by cutting the cost of government.

I am proud that my administration is the first county administration to repeal the equivalent of a 5% property tax increase in one year and actually put money back into our residents' pockets as pledged.

This tax cut was met with approval by residents and harsh criticism from Democrat Legislators. The same individuals' who allowed property taxes to increase by double-digits, let spending run amuck, depleted reserves and brought Nassau County to the brink of insolvency. For over a decade, their only real answer was to increase property taxes.

In fact, the critics claimed that my tax cuts were wrong. I disagree. I along with Republican Legislators laid out a plan to right size government. Comptroller Maragos reported that the County is ending 2010 with a \$17.2 million surplus. This surplus proves the Democrat pundits wrong and establishes this administrations' ability to meet and overcome fiscal challenges without taking more of your hard-earned money.

Yes! We closed a \$133 million deficit, returned money to residents, reduced the size of government to the lowest levels since the 1950's and turned a deficit into a surplus.

That is governing.

Unfortunately, 2011 brings additional fiscal challenges to our great County.

Challenges to meet an increase of \$44 million in employee pension costs;

Challenges to meet an increase of \$21 million in employee health care costs; and

Challenges to meet an increase of \$65 million in additional expenses associated with our labor contracts and contractual obligations that were kicked down the road to 2011 and 2012.

We met our 2011 challenges in large part by fulfilling my third pledge to cut wasteful spending.

Rather than raise property taxes, I worked with our labor leaders to achieve \$55 million in labor savings by cutting 400 positions and by managing this year with 610 fewer positions than in 2009. Nassau County now has the lowest employee headcount since the 1950s.

A good illustration of thoughtful restructuring can be seen in our police department, wherein we eliminated 125 desk jobs, put more police on the street, reduced crime by more than 10 percent and saved taxpayers \$20 million a year.

Our workforce has been thoughtfully reduced in many areas with an eye on reducing costs without compromising important services. These savings would not have been possible without the partnership of our workforce in streamlining government functions and operations.

We must also recognize our managers who are working well beyond the 9 to 5 workday. Their schedules and responsibilities now reflect that of the private sector.

Through reform and hard work, the Republican Legislature and I put Nassau County back on the road to recovery. By cutting over \$171 million in wasteful spending, we were able to declare war on taxes, not just by preventing them from going up but by fighting to bring them down.

That is why I eliminated a 16.5% property tax hike planned by the prior administration and continue to have no home energy tax in 2011.

But we did not stop there.

In an effort to create cost savings opportunities for local governments and taxpayers, I partnered with Suffolk County to create the first Regional Intergovernmental Purchasing Council.

Over 25 municipalities, schools and special districts have joined the Council to harness regional buying power for common goods and services. Just recently, fire districts announced their intent to participate. Together, we are reducing costs through volume purchasing and by reducing or eliminating duplicative administrative costs.

Although Nassau County has no jurisdiction over school spending, there is no limit to our duty to come up with creative and innovative ways to save tax dollars. No boundary to our responsibility to maintain

and improve the quality of life of our citizens. That is why the county has become active in the Nassau School and Municipal Savings Initiative to help local schools save tax dollars.

As part of my administration's commitment to ease the burden on our taxpayers, we are working collaboratively with BOCES, school superintendents, and school board officials to implement cost savings through cooperative purchasing in areas such as: out-of-district school bus transportation; goods and "non-instructional" services; internal audits; and IT/Telecom services.

The work we are doing here with the Nassau School and Municipal Savings Initiative must become a state and national model for successful education and municipal cooperation.

This is especially true at a time when residents are suffering from high unemployment rates, over 7,100 home foreclosures and the rising costs of everyday living.

Despite all our work, despite our tough choices and despite our commitment to change the way government performs, we are being forced to deal with arbitrary rules and inconsistent standards. It is these challenging economic times that make applying the new set of accounting rules even tougher than before.

For the past 20 years, Nassau County borrowed funds to pay property tax refunds. In fact, every Legislator here voted for that process.

While I have set out a plan to end borrowing once and for all in 2013, the new accounting rules effectively end it this year.

The hundreds of millions of dollars in waste generated by the County's assessment system now falls entirely on our residents shoulders annually.

As a result, last month I announced another round of major budget cuts for 2011 that protect homeowners and employers from a 21.5% mid-year property tax increase.

The plan cuts spending by over \$121 million by reducing employee-related spending. This includes a pay freeze for all county employees, over 200 layoffs, the elimination of 300 additional vacant positions, and a 13 day furlough for all County employees.

Once implemented, Nassau County will operate with over 800 fewer employees than it had before I took office.

Furthermore, I ordered \$40 million in across the board budget cuts. These cuts impact every department and many of the social services we provide.

This taxpayer savings plan includes another round of police department restructuring that redeploys 142 officers from behind desks and places them on the streets. This action not only increases public safety, but also reduces exorbitant overtime costs that are currently required due to minimum manning requirements negotiated by my predecessor in the police labor contract.

By reducing spending and Nassau's workforce, I took the appropriate steps required to protect our homeowners from a property tax increase.

Although the problem is solved for 2011, we continue to face challenges in 2012. To address these challenges, I will again seek to reduce costs.

As you know, governments across our nation are struggling to meet the increasing costs of labor. Nassau County is no exception.

Residents and I inherited labor contracts that increase costs beyond the taxpayers' ability to pay. Unfortunately, Nassau's labor contracts extend until 2016.

To provide some context on these costs, Nassau County faces increased 2012 employee contract costs of more than \$100 million. This is the equivalent of a 12 percent property tax increase.

No one has the authority to open labor contracts with the unions to achieve givebacks.

Under the law, current labor contracts can only be opened through mutual agreements with the unions or through the authority I seek through the Taxpayer Relief Act that I submitted to the Legislature in September.

Recognizing the inability of our residents to pay higher property taxes, I have, since September, worked to renegotiate these contracts to achieve real reform

I have notified County union leaders that an additional \$60 million in concessions will be necessary for 2012. If these concessions are not met, additional layoffs and service cuts will occur.

Rather than place their membership on the unemployment line, our public employee unions should do the right thing and agree to renegotiate their contracts.

To be clear, there will be voluntary concessions or employees will face layoffs.

While our County public employees are dedicated, hard-working people who provide important services, our residents can no longer afford the high costs associated with the contracts. This is why I am fully prepared to enforce the concessions needed to protect taxpayers and continue our County on the road to recovery.

For the first time ever, the taxpayers will have a seat at the collective bargaining table.

The expense of employee salaries, including increasingly high health care and pension costs, are forcing municipalities throughout the State to close down critical services. In 2010, we dodged that bullet.

We need the State to do their part to help us reduce employee costs.

New York State must reform the pension system now.

A different pension tier must be created for all new employees that utilize a defined Contribution Plan, more like the private sector which are subject to change in the market.

The time is now to put government on a diet.

Before Election Day, I stood with then-Attorney General Andrew Cuomo here in Nassau County to support a cap on property taxes. Now as our Governor, I stand with him demanding the State Assembly join the State Senate in passing legislation to cap property taxes and eliminate unfunded mandates that drive up the costs of running government.

With Nassau residents paying the second highest property taxes in the nation,

The time for reform is now.

My administration made hard decisions to place Nassau County on the road to recovery.

I have led this county in a nonpartisan fashion and my door is open to all that come with suggestions to help save taxpayer dollars.

I am disappointed that our Democrat Legislators have sought to obstruct my plans for a new more affordable Nassau County.

With a new budget and a New Year, I renew my offer and extend my hand to the Democrats to work with me to enact the policies that the people of Nassau County elected me to institute.

I vow to forge ahead. The residents of Nassau County put their trust in me to lead this government and they deserve nothing less.

We need to come together in a bipartisan manner to make the tough decisions that will return this County to greatness. I will not back down or give up, I will continue to fight for what's right and lead us to recovery.

I will not let anyone deter me from cutting government waste, growing our private sector to enhance economic development initiatives and from putting people back to work.

That is why the County also filed a lawsuit against the MTA to stop the job-killing payroll tax that hurts every small business in our County and drives up property taxes to fund New York City's transportation system.

Today, Nassau County taxpayers give the MTA nearly \$100 million more in tax revenue than ever before.

Rather than thank our businesses and residents who bear these costs, the MTA has chosen to demand \$26 million more from Nassau taxpayers.

Because I will not increase property taxes to fund the MTA's bloated bureaucracy, they have threatened to cut Long Island Bus services....this time eliminating 56% of routes, picking on our disabled and on those who rely on bus service to get to work.

The MTA's actions are unacceptable. I speak for all Nassau taxpayers when I say...we are outraged.

Fortunately, by not giving into their threats, I am happy to report that I have saved Nassau County taxpayers an additional \$5 million in 2011.

While the MTA will continue to operate bus service for 2011, I have solicited proposals for public-private partnership to operate bus service for 2012 and beyond.

After all, if employees cannot get to work in Nassau County, why would businesses locate here?

Attracting new employers and jobs to Nassau County is essential for our future.

Keeping my pledge to attract new jobs, I formed a business advisory panel of volunteer business owners that meet with me regularly and provide recommendations to improve our business climate.

To create these jobs and increase County revenue without raising property taxes, I have also looked at what the County lacks.

That is why I recently took steps to attract a minor league baseball team to Nassau's Mitchel Field area.

A minor league team would bring inexpensive family entertainment as well as new jobs to the County.

As you know, I have not been shy about my plans to develop the area near Nassau Veterans Memorial Coliseum and Mitchel Field into a sports-entertainment destination center.

For too long, Nassau Coliseum and the property that surrounds it has laid to waste rather than generate revenue for the County that can help hold the line on property taxes.

The aging Coliseum is no longer competitive with other sports complexes and conference centers around the region and nation.

Long Island's only professional sports team, the NY Islanders, have threatened to leave Nassau County in three years if a new Coliseum is not built.

To construct a new Coliseum, an investment of nearly \$400 million would be necessary.

Several options have been explored to keep our Islanders and build a new Nassau Coliseum...

Option one was for a sustainable mixed use development which hasn't proven economically viable at this time.

Option two is a public-private inter-nation partnership with the Shinnecock Nation to develop a gaming casino on the land that surrounds the Nassau Coliseum. This project would include a hotel and conference center, a newly refurbished Nassau Coliseum and restaurants and stores.

Finally, option three is to ask homeowners via referendum whether they wish to fund the construction of a new Coliseum.

Regardless of your preference, we must all agree that the status quo is not the answer. It never is.

A project of this magnitude would create thousands of jobs, generate hundreds of millions of dollars in tax revenue annually and would increase tourism in Nassau County. Best yet, it would help keep our New York Islanders here in Nassau County.

Over the coming months, I will seek public input on these options and work with community leaders to address any and all concerns.

While I am excited about the opportunity of developing a sports-entertainment destination center in Nassau County, I am still focused on helping create and retain other jobs throughout all areas of the County.

Believe it or not, our government actually can help create jobs rather than destroy them with higher

taxes.

One example is how the IDA helped Grumman Studios find favorable financing to purchase land, renovate a building down the block from here, and acquire the equipment needed to film movies right here in Bethpage.

This collaborate effort of government and private business is helping to make Nassau County the new hot spot for the movie industry.

Movies and television shows are now being filmed in Nassau County on a regular basis. Movies like Salt, the major motion picture starring Angelina Jolie was filmed at Grumman Studios.

Man on a Ledge, a film starring Sam Worthington and Elizabeth Banks, was shot right here at Gold Coast Studios and the film set before you today is from a new major television series.

Other television shows are also filming around the County.

Royal Pains, the hit USA television show, is filmed on several locations throughout the County, even using our own Theodore Roosevelt Executive and Legislative Building in Mineola.

Other County facilities have been used, including the Sands Point Preserve for filming of Fox's television show, Running Wilde, and the County jail for the television show The Good Wife and the Smurfs Movie. Other movies and television shows filmed in the County in 2010 include Arthur, White Collar, Gossip Girl, Boardwalk Empire, Wall Street II, Win-Win, Rescue Me, and Dark Horse.

Together, 30 plus movie and television shows resulted in over \$90 million being spent in the local economy, as well as producing revenue for the County.

To stay on this path and aid in our economic recovery, the Nassau County Film Commission hosted a Film Friendly Nassau County Location and Studio Tour of the County in December.

This business-friendly model encourages the industry to work in our region and create jobs here in Nassau County.

And it is these new jobs, and new industries, that are so desperately needed here on Long Island.

We stand here today on the former site of Northrop Grumman which occupied 6 million square feet in structures on 105 acres of land they leased from the U.S. Navy.

Believe it or not, 23,000 people worked here on Long Island in 1986 for Northrop Grumman - far less work for them here today.

That is why in addition to attracting film industry jobs to this property; my administration has worked to attract the homeland security industry.

In a post 9/11 world, our guard is always up. Americans must deal with threats when they travel, go to work or simply open a letter. Defense technology must adapt.

With the cooperation of law enforcement specialists, the private sector is where many solutions will come from.

I'm proud to report that a building where scientists built the spacecraft that carried men to the moon is now becoming a hub for the development of homeland security technology. Through job creation and innovation we, like the scientists who conquered space travel here, will conquer Nassau County's economic woes.

Last March, we held our State of the County at the Morrelly Homeland Security Center.

This one-of-a-kind, comprehensive, emergency-preparedness facility is designed to bring government, defense contractors and local business together to develop tomorrow's security technology and composite manufacturing industries today in Nassau County.

I want to thank Senator Dean Skelos and Congressman Peter King for securing the funding necessary to build this facility and the Long Island Forum for Technology for designing and operating it.

With the Morrelly Homeland Security Center located here in Nassau County, we have the ability to once again become a global leader in developing and commercializing homeland security/defense solutions.

As such, our County Office of Emergency Management has used Federal funds to locate their operations within that building.

Community safety is of utmost importance to our residents, my administration and the quality of life we enjoy here in Nassau County.

That is why I am so proud of our police work.

Major crime in Nassau County is down more than 10% since I took office and it's because of the some terrific programs our police department employs to take guns off the streets, reduce violence and crack down on drugs.

No one can deny the negative impact drugs have on our community. In 2010 over 100 individuals between the age of 25 and 29 were arrested for heroin related charges, 92 between the ages of 20 and 24. In total, 48 people died of heroin related deaths in Nassau County. That's nearly one person per week. This scourge cannot and will not be allowed to continue.

That is why Legislator John Ciotti and I launched Operation H.A.L.T. This aggressive enforcement initiative, coupled with our parental awareness and education program is aimed at combating heroin use and distribution.

To further crackdown on drugs, the County has offered a "Too Good for Drugs Program" to every school district. This wonderful program is funded by money seized from drug dealers, and costs taxpayers nothing. Through education, awareness, and enforcement we can and will continue to save lives

Although we often hear of drugs impacting our community, we don't always hear of the impact domestic violence has on our families.

Statistics indicate that the poor economy has led to a rise in family and domestic violence. Arrests for domestic violence incidents increased 58% in 2010.

Based on the dramatic findings of our Domestic Violence Task Force, I declared family violence a

public health emergency. Immediately, I took action by launching an awareness campaign in an effort to reduce the violence.

Violence is not the answer and will not be tolerated in Nassau County. This is why I have declared war on illegal guns.

As part of a comprehensive strategy to reduce gun violence, I along with the District Attorney's Office and the Police Department have held four "Gun Buy Back" programs. This initiative has taken more than 1,800 weapons off our streets since its inception.

With the implementation of our ShotSpotter gunshot location system, we are also reducing gun violence. ShotSpotter has provided us with the live detection and positioning of gunshots fired in an area while aiding investigations and arrests related to the use and possession of illegal weapons.

Our quest to maintain and improve the safety of our citizens does not stop there.

In an effort to protect our most vulnerable residents, Legislator Joe Belesi and I launched the R.E.A.C.H. Program to provide law enforcement officials with pertinent information and photos of individuals who have cognitive disorders, such as Alzheimer's disease, dementia and autism, should they become missing.

The program enables our police to rapidly disseminate information to the public in order to increase the likelihood that the missing person is found as quickly as possible.

The success of our police programs would not be possible without the leadership of a strong Police Commissioner. That is why I would like to thank Commissioner Lawrence Mulvey for not only his leadership this year, but for a career dedicated to law enforcement and serving our resident's.

Commissioner Mulvey, please stand to be recognized.

Each and every day, police officers and volunteer firefighters wake up and go to work with a single goal: protecting the public.

We can never thank them enough for their selfless acts of courage.

This year, we are reminded of how dangerous the life of a police officer and firefighter can be.

During a routine traffic stop on the Long Island Expressway, Nassau County tragically lost a dedicated, loving father and Highway Patrol Officer - Michael Califano.

This evening, we are joined by Michael's parents. Mr. & Mrs. Califano - our County owes your son a debt of gratitude that we will never be able to repay. I speak on behalf of the entire police force when I say that we remember Michael's courage and dedication each and every day.

In March, Nassau County Police Officer Geoffrey J. Breitkopf of the department's elite Bureau of Special Operation's was doing what he has done since 1998 - keeping us safe - when he was fatally injured while responding to a call in Massapequa Park.

Geoffrey, we will always remember your dedication to our residents.

This February also brought two separate fires in a 36 hour time span that sent seven New Hyde Park

volunteer firefighters to the hospital, one with serious injuries.

Things got even worse when Bellmore volunteer firefighter EMT Justin Angell was shot by a crazed gunman upon arriving at the scene of a car accident.

Bravery and courage are just two words to describe our volunteers.

It is this ...bravery and courage ... that we must recognize and honor.

That is why I am so proud that Senator Chuck Schumer answered my call to provide free Community College tuition grants to volunteer firefighters in Nassau County.

I cannot think of a better way to thank our volunteer firefighters who answer the call of duty to protect their fellow neighbors.

We also must honor our Veterans and active duty military who are serving our nation here and abroad.

That is why we are enhancing our services for Veterans. This past year, Nassau hosted its first job fair to specifically help our veterans find work.

The County also acquired land from the U.S. Navy to build homes that house homeless veterans.

On Friday, Legislator Norma Gonsalves and I were proud to cut a red ribbon and officially open a state-of-the-art veteran's clinic in Nassau University Medical Center.

This is the good news. Unfortunately, there is some bad news.

As you know, the Supreme Court recently ruled 8 to 1 to side with funeral protesters' right of free speech over the privacy rights of those mourning veterans that gave their life for our great nation.

Although I believe in freedom of speech and to debate public issues in an open manner - I believe in a family's right of privacy to grieve without disturbance. I find it insensitive that the Court would allow protesters to demonstrate at the funeral of those who fought for our nation.

Accordingly, I will soon file a local law strengthening Nassau's present law by requiring a permit to regulate the time, place and manner of demonstrations as well as increase the buffer zone to a minimum 1000 foot distance.

Our fallen military and their families deserve the respect of a grateful nation.

And that's exactly what they'll get here in Nassau County.

I would ask that our Gold Star Parents stand up and be recognized by our audience for their efforts to ensure this law is passed in Nassau County.

Serving our residents is what our government should be about.

I believe government can deliver top notch services at an affordable rate. No agency has done that better than our Department of Parks, Recreation and Museums.

To improve the health and welfare of our residents, it is vital to have access to parks and other

recreational facilities.

The Legislature and I invested significant time in improving recreational facilities throughout our park system.

After a decade of poor upkeep and outright neglect, our parks have risen from the ashes as vibrant destinations for the children and families of Nassau.

To help families with two working parents, we opened a new low-cost Nassau County Summer Recreation program for children at our County parks and made it affordable by charging nonresidents an entrance fee for using our parks.

Thanks to the sponsorship of RXR, we continued our tradition of hosting the Long Island Marathon.

We have reestablished all Nassau County Athletic Leagues for lacrosse, baseball, and softball.

I'm also proud to announce that my administration stepped up to the plate and is working to help save the Games for the Physically Challenged. Although the State cut all funding for the Games, we are working to raise the private funds needed to keep the Games alive in 2011 - for a 27th season.

On the entertainment side, we had the pleasure of hosting the Gaelic Games for the first time. By attracting thousands from around the world this event generated revenue for the County and its businesses.

We hosted the County's First Annual Cruise to the Show Parade and Car Show which attracted thousands to our streets and Eisenhower Park.

Over the summer we celebrated diversity through International Nights showcasing a variety of cultures with the sponsorship of Canon.

Thanks to TD Bank's sponsorship, we provided a 4th of July fireworks show despite the loss of a State fireworks show at Jones Beach.

Residents also had the opportunity to enjoy free family movie nights and concerts featuring top entertainment such as KC & the Sunshine Band thanks to the sponsorship of CBS-FM.

Nassau County itself, like our parks, is being renovated. We are not only in a state of fiscal recovery but a recovery of the spirit. Through economic growth, improvements in the services we provide, and a dedication to repairing our infrastructure we are showing the residents of Nassau that they can believe in their government.

On day one of taking office, I found it disturbing that I was moving into an office building nicer than the corporate sector, while Nassau County's true infrastructure was neglected and left in a state of disrepair.

This gross neglect was responsible for operational problems at the County's 911 Call Center just one year ago and at the County's sewage treatment plants.

A Nor'easter last March exposed the failings of Nassau's 911 phone system. A storm that only affected a fraction of Nassau County, left 911 calls unanswered locally, being pushed out of the system to as far as Albany.

Today - Nassau County has doubled the capacity of 911 Call Center and established a Non-Emergency phone line. The non-emergency phone line fielded as many as 6,000 calls in a recent blizzard, thus freeing up the 911 operators to handle life threatening emergencies.

As if the condition of our infrastructure didn't present enough challenges, Nassau experienced significant weather related challenges, the frequency and magnitude of snow storms this winter were stronger than we experienced for nearly two decades. We met every challenge with a coordinated effort to be prepared as possible and respond as effectively and efficiently as conceivable.

I am proud of our County workforce who without question performed quicker and more effectively than all neighboring counties and boroughs. I want to acknowledge the efforts our Department of Public Works Commissioner Shila Shah for keeping our roads passable. The men and woman of our DPW deserve a round of applause for their hard work.

Our crumbling infrastructure wasn't limited to just our parks and 911 Call Center, it also destroyed our crime laboratory.

We have all learned of its impact, especially as it relates to ecstasy and ketamine cases from 2007 through 2009.

Because District Attorney Rice and I find the situation completely unacceptable, I ordered a cease to all remaining operations at the Nassau County Crime Lab.

In the meantime, work currently performed by the crime lab is being outsourced to an independent laboratory to ensure the credibility of the evidence. The County has already hired an architectural firm to design a new state of the art crime lab at the Public Safety Center in Westbury.

Together, District Attorney Rice and I take these problems of the past seriously, and are making every effort to ensure the criminal justice system remains credible and fair to all.

Disturbingly, Nassau County's sewage treatment plants, at Cedar Creek and Bay Park, have also fallen victim to disrepair.

In addition, many County-owned buildings, including the court houses, have been allowed to deteriorate to unheard of levels. It has been a necessary but time consuming task to return these properties to acceptable conditions.

The prior administration's focus on park privatization, sewage diversion and ill-conceived consolidation of maintenance personnel, simply allowed these facilities to reach a breaking point with its lack of attention to funding for equipment, rehabilitation, maintenance, and providing administrative support.

This breaking point ultimately resulted in mechanical failures leading to discharges of excess treated solids at Bay Park into Reynolds Channel.

That is why in mid-2010, the Legislature and I put forth a capital plan to move forward with improvements to these sewage treatment facilities.

Together with Senator Chuck Schumer, Hempstead Town Councilman Anthony Santino and Legislators Fran Becker, Dennis Dunne, Denise Ford and Howard Kopel, we immediately began working to correct the problems associated with both the Bay Park Sewage Treatment Plant and the Cedar Creek Sewage

Treatment Facility.

These improvements are aimed at ending their negative impact on our environment and at improving the quality of life for residents who live in their shadows.

These improvements, implemented by the County Department of Public Works will reduce odors and eliminate impacts to our environment.

Over the coming years, we will continue to make the necessary improvements to our infrastructure while continuing preventive maintenance schedules implemented on my watch so that these facilities never again need such drastic attention.

These improvements would not have been possible without the support of our County Legislature who provided the votes needed for the 2010 Capital Improvement Plan that made the necessary investments while also creating jobs for our trade unions.

Our trades unions have been hit the hardest during this troubling economy, with unemployment hitting nearly 30 percent in this sector.

That is why I am hopeful the Legislature will continue to partner with me on a new Capital Improvement Plan, which I submitted in October of 2010. We must move forward with a new family court building and with rehabilitating vacant, abandoned and unfinished office space owned by the County so that we can begin moving out of buildings we lease at taxpayer's expense.

While our infrastructure investments have focused on improving the quality of life for our residents today, they have also focused on protecting our precious environment for the residents of the future.

Not only have we invested in protecting the waterways near Bay Park and Cedar Creek, but my administration also partnered with the State to stop the pollution of Zach's Bay near Jones Beach.

Nassau County entered into an agreement with New York State to treat waste from Jones Beach at our Cedar Creek facility so that families with children can once again enjoy the beauty and safety of Zach's Bay without the worry of pollution today and in the future.

This Administration remains committed to preserving the County's remaining open space, to provide adequate and diverse kinds of parklands and park facilities for residents to enjoy in the years to come.

Continuing our efforts to protect and preserve nature's beauty, Nassau County's Environmental Bond Act was used to purchase Grossman's Farm, a five-acre family farm located on Hempstead Avenue in Malverne.

To help families join us in protecting our environment, the Legislature and I dedicated \$5 million toward a Sustainable Green Energy Loan Program to help families convert to energy efficient homes. Unfortunately, the program sits idle awaiting authorization from either the Federal or State government.

And it is the State and Federal governments that must be our partner if we are to truly reform government, control spending, and stop out of control taxes.

My administration has taken many strides at reducing the tax burden on our homeowners while maintaining and improving services for our families and seniors.

However, it's time for the state and feds to do the same and help Nassau recover.

At a time when too many are suffering due to the poor economy, government must do all it can to carefully protect taxpayers while ensuring the safety and welfare of its residents.

President Ronald Reagan once stated, quote "There are no easy answers', but there are simple answers. We must have the courage to do what is morally right."

Well my friends, those are words to live and govern by.

Residents ask me.....can we recover from the past?

Can we bring real reform and the needed budget cuts to this government?

Can we bring jobs to our community?

Today I say to you...not that we can but we have and we will continue this year and in the years to follow. The citizens of Nassau deserve nothing less.

Together we are building a better Nassau, we will recover.

Thank you. God bless you. God bless Nassau County and God bless the United States of America.