

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25

NASSAU COUNTY LEGISLATURE

PETER SCHMITT
PRESIDING OFFICER

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Cradle of Aviation Museum
Uniondale, New York

Wednesday, March 14, 2012

6:54 P.M.

1

2 A P P E A R A N C E S:

3 LEGISLATOR PETER SCHMITT

4 Presiding Officer Leader

5 12th Legislative District

6

7 LEGISLATOR NORMA L. GONSALVES

8 Alternate Presiding Officer

9 13th Legislative District

10

11 LEGISLATOR HOWARD KOPEL

12 Alternate Presiding Officer

13 7th Legislative District

14

15 LEGISLATOR FRANCIS X. BECKER, JR.

16 6th Legislative District

17

18 LEGISLATOR VINCENT T. MUSCARELLA

19 8th Legislative District

20

21 LEGISLATOR RICHARD J. NICOLELLO

22 9th Legislative District

23

24 LEGISLATOR JOSEPH BELESI

25 14th Legislative District

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25

LEGISLATOR DENISE FORD
4th Legislative District

LEGISLATOR ROSE WALKER
17th Legislative District

LEGISLATOR KEVAN ABRAHAMS
Minority Leader
1st Legislative District

LEGISLATOR JUDY JACOBS
10th Legislative District

LEGISLATOR JOSEPH SCANNELL
5th Legislative District

LEGISLATOR WAYNE WINK
11th Legislative District

LEGISLATOR DAVID DENENBERG
19th Legislative District

LEGISLATOR ROBERT TROIANO
2nd Legislative District

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25

LEGISLATOR DELIA DeRIGGI-WHITTON
18th Legislative District

WILLIAM MULLER
Clerk of the Legislature

LEGISLATOR SCHMITT: I call the
legislature to order and I would ask the

1 clerk of the legislature to call the
2 roll.

3 MR. MULLER: Deputy Presiding
4 Officer Gonsalves.

5 LEGISLATOR GONSALVES: Here.

6 MR. MULLER: Alternate Deputy
7 Presiding Officer Kopel.

8 LEGISLATOR KOPEL: Here.

9 MR. MULLER: Legislator Troiano.

10 LEGISLATOR TROIANO: Here.

11 MR. MULLER: Legislator Solage.
12 Legislator Ford.

13 LEGISLATOR FORD: Here.

14 MR. MULLER: Legislator Scannell.

15 LEGISLATOR SCANNELL: Here.

16 MR. MULLER: Legislator Becker.

17 LEGISLATOR BECKER: Present.

18 MR. MULLER: Legislator
19 Muscarella.

20 LEGISLATOR MUSCARELLA: Here.

21 MR. MULLER: Legislator
22 Nicoletto.

23

24 LEGISLATOR NICOLELLO: Here.

25 MR. MULLER: Legislator Bosworth.

1 LEGISLATOR BOSWORTH: Here.
2 MR. MULLER: Legislator Wink.
3 LEGISLATOR WINK: Here.
4 MR. MULLER: Legislator Belesi.
5 LEGISLATOR BELESI: Here.
6 MR. MULLER: Legislator Dunne.
7 LEGISLATOR DUNNE: Here.
8 MR. MULLER: Legislator Jacobs.
9 LEGISLATOR JACOBS: Here.
10 MR. MULLER: Legislator Walker.
11 LEGISLATOR WALKER: Here.
12 MR. MULLER: Legislator
13 DeRiggi-Whitton.
14 LEGISLATOR DERIGGI-WHITTON: Here.
15 MR. MULLER: Legislator
16 Denenberg.
17 LEGISLATOR DENENBERG: Here.
18 MR. MULLER: Minority Leader
19 Abrahams.
20 LEGISLATOR ABRAHAMS: Here.
21 MR. MULLER: Presiding Officer
22 Schmitt.
23
24 PRESIDING OFFICER SCHMITT: Here.
25 MR. MULLER: We have a quorum.

1 PRESIDING OFFICER SCHMITT: Thank
2 you very much. We have a quorum. We are
3 in session. Now we wait.

4 Please come to order. Would you
5 please join me in welcoming the county
6 executive of Nassau County, the Honorable
7 Edward P. Mangano.

8 COUNTY EXECUTIVE MANGANO: Thank
9 you. Good evening Nassau County.

10 Let me begin by acknowledging my
11 colleagues who have joined us here this
12 evening. Presiding Officer Schmitt,
13 thank you for hosting today's State of
14 the County address along with the members
15 of the legislature. Minority Leader
16 Abrahams, County Comptroller Maragos,
17 County Clerk O'Connell and District
18 Attorney Rice. It's a pleasure to have
19 you here. To the judges of our great
20 county thank you for joining us.

21 I would like to thank the Bethpage,
22 Hicksville and Westbury fire departments
23
24 for serving as our color guard and
25 Legislator Fran Becker for leading us in

1 the Star Spangled Banner.

2 Before we begin, everyone with an
3 iPhone or Android please remove it from
4 your pocket, go to the app store, search
5 Nassau County and download the free
6 Nassau County application if you have not
7 done so already Nassau Now. You will
8 need it later in the speech.

9 Neighbors, friends and colleagues,
10 I speak with you tonight from the Cradle
11 of Aviation Museum, a monument to our
12 rich history. We should certainly be
13 proud of our past. Here at Mitchell
14 Field air races lit up the skies in the
15 1920s. Those were amazing times to live,
16 but they were not the best times. The
17 best times shall be the future and in the
18 infinite tomorrows ahead of us. That is
19 where the excitement lies. That is where
20 our best days are.

21 Nassau County, just like our
22 nation's economy, is in a state of
23
24 recovery from a decade of poor fiscal
25 policies. Each day our county and

1 economy progresses from where we are to
2 where we are meant to be. This journey
3 is not an easy one. There are many
4 hurdles between here and there. Whether
5 you're a resident or employer you're
6 feeling the negative impact of our
7 nation's economy. Make no mistake about
8 it, times are tough. The decisions
9 needed to improve the lives of our
10 citizens are even tougher.

11 Most economists agree. We face a
12 stagnant economy, high taxes, a failure
13 to retain jobs, an exodus of our youth, a
14 government that seems to grow bigger and
15 more expensive, partisan politics running
16 rampant and individuals fear mongering.

17 Our first problem is that Nassau
18 County is among the highest property
19 taxed counties in the nation and these
20 taxes are driving companies and their
21 jobs out of New York. Plainly put,
22 property taxes are killing us.

23

24 My administration is combating what
25 economist Pearl Kramer refers to as

1 taxflation, or ever increasing property
2 taxes.

3 With respect to your wallet, my
4 administration is the first in recent
5 history to put money back in your pocket
6 by repealing the home energy tax that was
7 placed on everything and anything used to
8 heat or cool your home, oil, gas,
9 electricity. Even fire wood. My action
10 fulfilled my pledge and reinforced my
11 commitment to save taxpayer dollars by
12 cutting the cost of government.

13 Together with the Republican
14 majority in the legislature, we
15 eliminated a planned 16 and a half
16 percent real property tax hike for every
17 homeowner and business. We have cut
18 spending and held the line on property
19 taxes for two consecutive years. The old
20 ways of hiking property taxes, spending
21 lavishly and ignoring the need for
22 reforms has ended.

23

24 Unfortunately, the problems they
25 have created have not. The legislature

1 and I inherited a decade's worth of
2 problems, along with several years of
3 projected deficits. 2012 was no
4 exception. Fiscal experts determined our
5 county faced a 310 million dollar deficit
6 due to Nassau's rising pension costs,
7 increasing Medicaid cost, the stagnant
8 economy, a greater demand on social
9 services and 100 million dollars in debt
10 associated with the broken property tax
11 assessment system.

12 Over the past decade government has
13 simply grown too large and we put it on a
14 diet. The legislature and I, in
15 cooperation with NIFA, addressed Nassau's
16 challenges with real solutions while
17 recognizing residents cannot afford a
18 property tax increase in this economy.

19 Rather than increase property taxes
20 to pay for Nassau's past mistakes, the
21 Republican legislature, NIFA and I passed
22 a budget that cut spending and reduced
23
24 the county payroll by 150 million
25 dollars. These cuts were necessary as

1 payroll accounts for nearly 50 percent of
2 Nassau's budget that without action our
3 children would have to shoulder the
4 burden.

5 Reducing the workforce began not
6 with union employees but in the offices
7 of my administration where we are now
8 operating with over 110 fewer appointed
9 positions, often referred to as
10 patronage. This alone has saved our
11 taxpayers 14 million dollars a year
12 annually. Despite these cuts and other
13 cost-saving actions, Nassau's fiscal
14 challenges required harsher remedies as
15 the county continued to face higher costs
16 from unfunded mandates, pensions and
17 health care.

18 Accordingly, my administration has
19 reduced the number of employee positions
20 by 1,776 since I took office. The
21 reforms implemented during the past two
22 years have stopped business as usual in
23
24 Nassau. It is for that reason that well
25 funded special interests have fought

1 reform and attempted to influence certain
2 politicians to oppose my solutions.

3 While reform is a nice name for
4 change, reform is a word career
5 politicians and special interests hate.
6 Reform is another word for tough
7 decisions.

8 A famous philosopher once wrote,
9 All truth passes through three stages.
10 First it is ridiculed. Second, it is
11 violently opposed. Third, it is accepted
12 as being self evident. How true that
13 statement is.

14 If you follow me in the press you
15 will notice that the changes I propose or
16 in some cases just utter are often
17 criticized for countless hours and people
18 chime in on how county government should
19 not change. Special interests cajole,
20 threaten, lobby and often launch
21 misleading media campaigns. They have
22 not learned that personal attacks and
23
24 fear mongering will get us nowhere.

25 Whether you're a Republican or

1 Democrat, Liberal or Conservative, union
2 employee or appointed employee, we must
3 all come together and work in the
4 public's best interest.

5 For that reason, I again extend an
6 invitation to the Democrats on the county
7 legislature to join me in reforming
8 Nassau County.

9 Over the past two years I have put
10 forth many proposals that have stimulated
11 debate, most successful, one or two not,
12 but let me tell you they were all
13 intended to turn this county around.

14 A good illustration of thoughtful
15 reform is in our police department.
16 Since 2010 we eliminated more than 225
17 desk jobs, assigned 88 more police
18 officers to patrol, reduced crime by more
19 than ten percent and saved taxpayers 30
20 million dollars annually.

21 Just last week the legislature
22 implemented additional solutions to
23
24 address Nassau's finances by approving a
25 plan that transforms four current police

1 precincts into new policing centers and
2 helps fight costly overtime. The plan
3 modernizes Nassau's 1972 eight precinct
4 building plan to account for the last 40
5 years of technology and crime fighting
6 enhancements.

7 Rather than discuss this plan on
8 its merits and on what it actually
9 accomplishes, special interests and a few
10 legislators they enlisted, used fear
11 mongering tactics. Fortunately they
12 could not skew the fact that public
13 safety remains intact. All 177 patrol
14 cars remain in their current neighborhood
15 assignments and 48 additional police
16 officers are joining the 40 I reassigned
17 from desks to patrol.

18 I commend the Republican
19 legislature for defending good government
20 and having the courage to protect
21 taxpayers by implementing efficiencies
22 that strong special interests oppose. I
23
24 remain optimistic that my Democrat
25 colleagues will embrace these reforms as

1 we address Nassau's structural problems
2 with reoccurring savings.

3 To truly fix Nassau County, we must
4 address each and every structural problem
5 with real solutions. We must recognize
6 that all cannot be fixed in one year. It
7 took a decade to get us here and it will
8 take a few years to fix it.

9 Accordingly, the legislature and I
10 have applied innovative, private sector
11 solutions to several costly public sector
12 problems. A notable example has been my
13 initiative which created a public-private
14 partnership for Nassau's bus system.

15 In 2011, Nassau's bus operator, the
16 MTA, presented our county with two
17 options. Option one, pay the MTA 26
18 million dollars more or option two, cut
19 bus service in half. Both ultimatums
20 were wrong for Nassau County as one hurt
21 our residents and the other penalized
22 riders.

23
24 Accordingly, I sought a
25 public-private partnership. Today,

1 Veolia Transportation operates Nassau
2 buses. Nassau taxpayers saved over 26
3 million dollars annually. Nassau riders
4 receive more efficient bus service.
5 Nassau is providing the disabled with a
6 reliable able ride service. And for the
7 first time in recent memory every bus
8 left the terminal to pick up riders.

9 See, on average, ten percent of the
10 MTA buses never left the terminal,
11 creating delays and missed service each
12 and every day. In fact, let me tell you
13 a true story.

14 A rider called my office just days
15 after Veolia began operating our buses to
16 complain that he missed the bus and he
17 missed that bus because it was on time
18 and had been historically late.

19 If you read the news stories or
20 attended meetings of the legislature at
21 the time you would have thought I
22 proposed a toll on the LIE.

23

24 A second successful public-private
25 partnership implemented by my

1 administration involves inmate health
2 care. At the Nassau jail when an inmate
3 needed care, whether it be for a
4 stomachache, stitches, physical therapy
5 or even an x-ray it required a trip to
6 the local hospital. The problem? It
7 required residents to pay for two
8 correction officers per inmate to stay at
9 the hospital during the entire visit.

10 My solution? We now provide health
11 care at the jail. This has resulted in
12 4,000 clinic runs being reduced to 200, a
13 95 percent reduction. 400 hospital
14 visits have been reduced to a mere 50, an
15 87 percent reduction. And guess what my
16 friends? Taxpayers are saving nearly six
17 million dollars.

18 Building on the success at the jail
19 and with our bus system, I am exploring a
20 public-private partnership to address
21 problems at Nassau's sewage treatment
22 plants. Disturbingly, I inherited a
23
24 bankrupt sewer district with facilities
25 that were severely neglected for

1 decades. This resulted in violations by
2 the New York State DEC and an outcry from
3 the public.

4 Together with Senator Schumer,
5 Hempstead Councilman Santino and
6 Legislators Becker, Dunne, Ford and
7 Kopel, we began implementing solutions to
8 the problems associated at both sewage
9 facilities.

10 Accordingly, Nassau has invested
11 over 70 million dollars for improvements
12 in the county's plants at Cedar Creek and
13 Bay Park to avoid environmental
14 nightmare. It amazes me that special
15 interests, with the assistance of a
16 legislator, have criticized this progress
17 after having been responsible for years
18 of neglect.

19 The fact remains, under my watch
20 critical repairs that were ignored for a
21 decade have been completed. New
22 equipment has been purchased and the
23
24 overall operation and condition of the
25 plant has improved dramatically. In

1 fact, last month, Bay Park marked one
2 year without any DEC violations.
3 Although the goal is to never receive any
4 violations at all, it is a tremendous
5 victory for the men and women at the
6 plant and the success doesn't stop
7 there. Last year Cedar Creek's success
8 was reflected in favorable reports by the
9 DEC.

10 However, I still am not satisfied.
11 That is why Legislators Ford and Kopel
12 joined with me in creating a new
13 notification system designed to help
14 protect our residents and keep them
15 informed about problems that occur at
16 these facilities.

17 Our work is not finished. We must
18 continue to seek operational and
19 managerial improvements. I have
20 continually sought to do what many of you
21 are doing in your businesses and
22 households. That is to reduce spending.
23
24 My solution to Nassau's bloated
25 government has been to identify and cut

1 wasteful spending.

2 To that end, I, along with the
3 Republican legislature, consolidated over
4 ten departments into four, saving
5 taxpayers four million dollars a year.
6 Nassau's newly created Department of
7 Human Services is an example of how our
8 county has integrated and utilized its
9 resources to achieve efficiency and cost
10 effectiveness while maintaining services
11 for our residents. The merger alone
12 enabled the county to reduce staff
13 performing duplicative functions and
14 realize a savings of 1.8 million dollars
15 annually.

16 Under my direction we have
17 implemented many additional cost saving
18 measures. We have reduced energy cost by
19 seven and a half million dollars a year
20 by simply creating competition among
21 providers. And we have eliminated nearly
22 one million dollars in annual telephone
23
24 line costs that were unnecessary.

25 To maximize revenues, Nassau's jail

1 is now housing federal and Suffolk
2 inmates. This alone increased revenue by
3 11.2 million dollars a year for our
4 county despite a 5.5 percent reduction in
5 the number of correction officers and
6 overtime reduction at the jail of over
7 10,000 hours at the jail.

8 We are also generating common sense
9 revenue by selling hundreds of surplus
10 vehicles and by charging nonresidents a
11 fee for using our parks system. Everyone
12 in my administration is doing more with
13 less.

14 In the Coordinated Agency for
15 Spanish Americans, we are providing
16 service to more clients than ever. In
17 fact, this year we assisted 5,000 clients
18 despite a 55 percent reduction in county
19 employees.

20 And in the Office of Minority
21 Affairs, we have maintained our
22 commitment to diversity with more
23
24 Minority and Women-Owned Enterprises
25 being certified under this administration

1 than ever before.

2 My administration has cut 200
3 million dollars in wasteful spending.
4 The equivalent of a 25 percent property
5 tax increase had these spending cuts not
6 been made. We have saved over 30 million
7 dollars through public-private
8 partnerships, reduced payroll by over 100
9 million dollars a year and are doing more
10 work than ever before. Rather than
11 simply raising taxes and add to Nassau's
12 ailments, these solutions help advance
13 recovery and create a strong foundation
14 for our future.

15 Nassau's problems have not only
16 developed due to wasteful spending but
17 also due to fraud. To address this
18 problem my administration has implemented
19 fraud detection solutions that protect
20 taxpayers and ensure that only eligible
21 recipients receive public assistance.
22 I've sent the message out loud and clear,
23
24 if you're cheating the system we will
25 catch you.

1 I am pleased to announce that to
2 date our Department of Social Services
3 Office of Investigations has uncovered
4 more than 23 million dollars in welfare
5 fraud, waste and abuse resulting in the
6 recovery to our taxpayers of seven
7 million dollars. Our team of
8 investigators has also prevented eight
9 million dollars in additional fraud by
10 uncovering it in its earliest stages.

11 An extra eight million dollars in
12 inaccurate and improperly provider
13 billing has been uncovered through audits
14 of Medicaid billing and claims as well.

15 The county has also achieved
16 millions more in recoveries from
17 improperly paid welfare benefits detected
18 by the Special Investigations Unit.

19 Please join me in giving special
20 recognition to our Department of Social
21 Services director of investigations who
22 has led this incredible effort on behalf
23
24 of our taxpayers, Scott Skrynecki.

25 Scott, please stand and be

1 recognized.

2 The solution to Nassau's high taxes
3 lies not just in county government but in
4 all layers of government. Nassau County
5 represents one of the smallest portions
6 of your tax bill. We all know the
7 largest share comes from schools. That
8 is why Nassau and Suffolk counties formed
9 the Long Island Intergovernmental
10 Purchasing Counsel. This counsel
11 purchases items in bulk, and I am proud
12 to report that over the past year many of
13 Nassau's 56 school districts joined the
14 counsel to participate in various
15 money-saving initiatives.

16 It is for this reason I joined with
17 Governor Cuomo in supporting a property
18 tax cap. Together these solutions have
19 helped stop the bleeding.

20 However, the real surgery for
21 Nassau County must occur with our broken
22 property tax assessment system. For too
23
24 many years Nassau simply ignored its
25 future and settled for quick fixes rather

1 than address the real underlying
2 problems. The Band-Aid approach left our
3 great county on life support.

4 Nassau, like other counties and
5 states, is facing significant fiscal
6 challenges. However, our challenges are
7 amplified when compared to neighboring
8 counties due to its broken property tax
9 assessment system.

10 Nassau County has stood alone in
11 the state as the only county to collect
12 17 cents on the dollar in taxes yet
13 return the whole dollar when an error is
14 made. Imagine having to return one
15 dollar for every 17 cents received.

16 Well, the Supreme Court upheld the
17 reforms passed by the Republican
18 legislature and myself to end this
19 practice that has resulted in 1.6 billion
20 dollars in debt related to property tax
21 refunds that have accumulated under the
22 wasteful system. The interest on this
23
24 debt costs the average homeowner 20
25 percent more annually on their county tax

1 bill.

2 As you can imagine, this alone has
3 made holding the line on taxes very
4 difficult. Together, with the Nassau
5 County Interim Finance Authority, also
6 known as NIFA, the Republican legislature
7 and I have advanced a plan that pays off
8 this debt and ends the practice of
9 borrowing against our children's future
10 to pay tax refunds once and for all
11 without raising real property taxes.

12 If this multiyear plan is not
13 supported, residents would be forced to
14 pay for a decade of waste in a single
15 year. This would mean either a massive
16 property tax hike or deep, deep cuts that
17 impact all levels of service. Nassau's
18 plan stops that, pays off refunds and
19 ends borrowing in a responsible way.

20 Rather than play politics and
21 threaten to block the solution to
22 Nassau's fiscal stability, the time is
23
24 now for three Democrat county legislators
25 to lay politics aside, stand up and join

1 NIFA, the majority in the legislature and
2 me in implementing a plan that prevents a
3 property tax hike and pays off the tax
4 refunds that are owed to our residents.

5 The legislature and I continue to
6 face the daunting task of fixing Nassau's
7 broken property tax assessment system, a
8 system governed by New York State law,
9 the only assessment system of its kind in
10 the state and the only one with a billion
11 dollars in debt.

12 Absent state support to change this
13 system, I have set forth a plan to reduce
14 and correct errors prior to demanding
15 payment. That is why I froze assessments
16 for four years just as the majority of
17 assessing jurisdictions throughout the
18 state do as well.

19 To further address assessment
20 problems, Nassau implemented a program
21 that ensures for the first time ever that
22 homeowners who grieve their taxes and
23
24 reached a settlement or judgement see
25 that justice reflected in their

1 assessment. This reform alone has saved
2 residents 28 million dollars annually.

3 While I have implemented many
4 reforms aimed at saving taxpayer dollars,
5 I have also sought improvements in
6 overall operations within all
7 departments, including the police
8 department. Over the past year the
9 department has faced a series of setbacks
10 from problems at the crime lab to the
11 performance of a hand full of officers on
12 the streets.

13 Recognizing these serious concerns,
14 I found it necessary to recruit a fresh
15 leader to serve as Nassau County's top
16 cop. I sought to appoint an individual
17 with years of experience and I found that
18 in Commissioner Thomas Dale.

19 Commissioner Dale has begun to provide
20 strong leadership in the department and
21 address supervisory concerns. He is a
22 man of great character and conviction and
23
24 will set an example for our police
25 department to follow in the decades to

1 come.

2 Tom Dale will highlight the great
3 and brave work Nassau police officers
4 perform in part by restoring discipline
5 and the respect our officers have earned
6 and deserve.

7 Commissioner Dale please stand to
8 be recognized.

9 When I hired Commissioner Dale
10 earlier this year I made it clear that
11 despite crime being down over ten percent
12 Nassau must cut down on burglaries.

13 Well, my friends, the Nassau County
14 Police Department has and continues to
15 send a clear message to burglars, stay
16 out of Nassau.

17 Putting burglars behind bars is our
18 top priority. In the first eight weeks
19 of Tom Dale's leadership the police
20 department cracked down on burglaries and
21 made 77 burglary arrests.

22 While we live in one of the safest
23
24 counties in the nation, there is always
25 more work to do to identify and fight

1 changing crime trends. These trends
2 include the prescription drug epidemic
3 that is plaguing our region and nation.

4 Last month Commissioner Dale and I
5 announced a sweep conducted by the Nassau
6 County's police department's narcotics
7 squad that resulted in the arrest of 17
8 individuals for forging prescriptions at
9 various pharmacies. Prescription drugs
10 are clearly driving individuals to commit
11 burglaries, including residential
12 burglaries, in an effort to find ways to
13 pay for their addiction.

14 Prescription drug abuse has reached
15 epidemic proportions nationwide.
16 Statistics now indicate that three times
17 as many residents have died from
18 prescription opiates than from heroin.
19 And while the number of heroin arrests
20 has dropped significantly opiate arrests
21 have doubled.

22 Statistics also indicate that there
23
24 have been more than 200 pharmacy
25 robberies throughout the nation in the

1 past year and 7,000 such incidents since
2 2004. In Nassau we have felt first hand
3 the devastating effects of prescription
4 drug abuse during a deadly pharmacy
5 robbery on New Year's Eve in Seaford.

6 Tonight we pause and remember the
7 life of ATF agent John Capano. John
8 responded to assist his fellow neighbors
9 and made the ultimate sacrifice. Our
10 community owes John and his family a debt
11 of gratitude that we can never repay. I
12 speak on behalf of every resident when I
13 say that we remember John for his courage
14 and dedication each and every day.

15 John's family joins us tonight. I
16 ask that his sister, brother-in-law,
17 niece and nephews stand and be
18 recognized. They are great citizens and
19 they have used their tragedy to help
20 others and I am more than proud that they
21 are helping me and Nassau County to
22 address this epidemic.

23

24 Nassau has established a task force
25 to work on solutions to the problem of

1 prescription drug misuse and abuse. This
2 task force put together a dozen
3 recommendations to enhance education,
4 awareness and enforcement. The county
5 has also partnered with the FBI-supported
6 Long Island Pharmacy Crimes Task Force to
7 combat the potentially deadly
8 prescription drug abuse crisis. Together
9 we've hosted a security summit to advise
10 pharmacy workers how they can better
11 protect their businesses and keep
12 pharmaceuticals out of the hands of
13 addicts.

14 Under my direction, police officers
15 are visiting local schools to speak with
16 students about the dangers of
17 prescription drugs. Members of our
18 Prescription Drug Abuse Prevention
19 Committee are also educating parents on
20 the signs of drug abuse and addiction in
21 their children.

22 To help residents shed their unused
23
24 and unwanted meds, the county has
25 installed prescription drug disposal bins

1 at all police precincts to ensure these
2 drugs do not end up in the hands of
3 children.

4 On the treatment side, I announced
5 the availability of 70 additional drug
6 addiction treatment spots at the County's
7 Opioid Treatment Program. This
8 nationally recognized program presently
9 treats 580 clients per month.

10 The success of our police programs
11 would not be possible without the
12 commitment of each and every officer.
13 Their commitment has resulted in major
14 crime being down more than ten percent
15 since I took office. Our police
16 department employs effective programs to
17 take guns off the streets, reduce
18 violence and crack down on drug abuse.

19 Over the past year the police
20 department along with the district
21 attorney has hosted two gun buy back
22 programs which took 1,500 illegal guns
23
24 off the streets.

25 Although we often hear of guns and

1 drugs impacting our community we don't
2 always hear of the impact domestic
3 violence has on our families. Please
4 join me in acknowledging the dedicated
5 and hard-working members of the Family
6 Violence Task Force who are here with us
7 this evening as they are committed to
8 combating this public health emergency.
9 I'm very proud of this committee. It is a
10 bipartisan committee. They work so
11 hard. Please stand and be recognized.

12 In addition to a tsunami of fiscal
13 issues and a tide of reforms, last August
14 Mother Nature literally tested Nassau and
15 its ability to respond to the needs of
16 its residents. I'm proud to report that
17 we stepped up to the plate and
18 succeeded.

19 A good part of our preparation was
20 due to a friend and late colleague OEM
21 Commissioner Jim Callahan. Just before
22 the hurricane Jim passed on. This
23
24 evening we are joined by Jim's wife
25 Patricia and his family.

1 Pat, we thank you for sharing Jim
2 with us. Together let us pause to
3 remember the legacy of Jim Callahan he
4 has made such a difference in Nassau
5 County.

6 Under the direction of Commissioner
7 Craig Craft, OEM led the way in hurricane
8 preparedness. Facing a potential direct
9 hit from the eye of a hurricane, I, along
10 with many elected officials throughout
11 the tristate area, ordered a mandatory
12 evacuation of individuals residing in
13 storm surge zones.

14 The Nassau County Office of
15 emergency Management opened an emergency
16 operations center with other governmental
17 agencies and provided guidance, support
18 and coordination working with the towns,
19 cities and villages, fire districts,
20 health care facilities and individual
21 constituents at a time when we needed it
22 most.

23
24 With their oversight, 400,000
25 residents were ordered to evacuate, 21

1 shelters were opened, in addition to
2 shelters for pets and individuals with
3 medical needs.

4 I would like to recognize Nassau
5 County's new commissioner of health, Dr.
6 Larry Eisenstein, for his efforts in
7 facilitating the safe evacuation of 1,500
8 frail residents housed in a hospital and
9 six nursing homes during the hurricane.

10 Dr. Eisenstein success provided me
11 the opportunity to recommend him to an
12 appointment as our commissioner of health
13 and he has done a great job.

14 Even though Hurricane Irene was
15 downgraded to a tropical storm by the
16 time it hit our shores it left quite a
17 mark. The Department of Public Works
18 worked tirelessly to make county roadways
19 and facilities safe during and after
20 Hurricane Irene. This massive
21 undertaking involved the cutting and
22 removal of more than 2,400 trees,
23
24 grinding of dangerous stumps and
25 emergency repair of sidewalks.

1 I'm proud to report that
2 Commissioner Sheila Shah and the men and
3 women of the Public Works Department had
4 all county roads cleared and open by 8
5 p.m. on the evening of the storm.

6 Managed by OEM, the county's
7 emergency operations center was activated
8 and over 50 separate agencies reacted to
9 coordinate response and resources. After
10 the storm cleanup concluded, OEM
11 continued to push forward working
12 tirelessly to help individuals and
13 businesses who suffered damage from the
14 storm.

15 I am proud to report that OEM was
16 successful in securing federal relief for
17 our residents and employers totaling
18 nearly 16 million dollars.

19 I would also like to thank
20 Presiding Officer Schmitt and the entire
21 county legislature for providing support
22 throughout the storm. Throughout the
23
24 storm Nassau's bravest, our volunteer
25 fire fighters, responded to calls and

1 continued to push forward to help those
2 most in need.

3 To assist our volunteers and our
4 senior citizen population, I have
5 launched two life saving programs this
6 past year. The Yellow Dot Program
7 assists in lifesaving measures involving
8 victims of automobile accidents. And the
9 Vial Of Life Program similarly assists
10 individuals during emergencies at home.
11 It is my hope that these programs help
12 save lives, along with the proper
13 training our fire fighters receive from
14 the new burn buildings at their training
15 center in Nassau County.

16 As volunteers, the brave men and
17 women from our fire departments must be
18 commended not only today but every day.
19 To do so, Nassau has provided free
20 community college tuition to 621
21 volunteer fire fighters and is processing
22 170 applications for the spring 2012
23
24 semester. So join your local fire
25 department and get an education as well.

1 I cannot think of a better way to thank
2 our volunteers who answer the call of
3 duty to protect their fellow neighbors.

4 We stand here today in the Cradle
5 of Aviation Museum located at Mitchell
6 Field. This museum is dedicated to
7 heroes that defended our nation's freedom
8 and advanced our nation forward in
9 aviation. Shortly, I will ask the
10 legislature to pass a law renaming Oak
11 Street in Hempstead after the Tuskegee
12 Airmen who fought for our nation's
13 freedom.

14 In Nassau County I have made it a
15 priority to honor our veterans and active
16 duty military who are serving our nation
17 here and abroad. This is why we are
18 enhancing services for our veterans.
19 This past year we established 42
20 county-owned homes located at Mitchell
21 Field to provide affordable housing for
22 veterans and their families and an
23
24 additional 18 homes for active duty
25 military personal.

1 The county also transferred land in
2 Hicksville to a not-for-profit named
3 Homes for our Homecoming Heroes which
4 plans to construct a home for a veteran
5 returning from the Middle East.

6 Tonight I announce the
7 establishment of a brand new Housing for
8 Our Freedom Program. This groundbreaking
9 program, which is the first program of
10 its kind in the nation, will provide
11 affordable and sustainable housing to our
12 soldiers and their families.

13 To accomplish this, the IDA through
14 an LDC will issue bonds -- it will not
15 cost the taxpayer dollars -- that will be
16 used to purchase foreclosed homes from
17 banks. The homes will be rehabilitated
18 and then rented to members of our armed
19 forces so that they can raise their
20 families in a safe and stable housing.
21 After three years soldiers will be given
22 the opportunity to purchase these homes.

23

24 There's no better way to thank the brave
25 men and women of our armed forces than to

1 give them the chance to live the American
2 dream that they have fought to protect.
3 We owe them that and much, much more.

4 Continuing our dedication to
5 veterans, I, along with the legislature,
6 opened a new office for the Nassau
7 Veterans Service Agency in East Meadow at
8 Nassau University Medical Center. The
9 county also joined in the opening of a
10 new Veterans Affairs health clinic at the
11 same location to provide state of the art
12 medical care for our veterans.

13 This year we also honored the
14 service of our veterans in Eisenhower
15 Park and hosted two successful stand
16 downs in 2011 which provided food,
17 clothing, counseling and access to
18 valuable services to our veterans. I'm
19 proud to report that these stand downs
20 will continue in 2012 along with the
21 transportation to the Northport VA that
22 our county provides to veterans.

23
24 The county, in conjunction with
25 Winthrop Hospital, will also host a

1 veteran specific job fair this coming
2 April. With the large number of
3 returning veterans we encourage local
4 employers to join us in employing our
5 hometown heroes.

6 I believe government should provide
7 open space and recreational
8 opportunities. After a decade of poor
9 upkeep and outright neglect, our parks
10 have risen from the ashes as vibrant
11 destinations for our children and
12 families in Nassau. To help homes with
13 two working parents, we offered a low
14 cost summer recreation program for
15 children at our parks and made it
16 affordable by charging nonresidents an
17 entrance fee for using our parks.

18 Parks programs are kept affordable
19 also by the generosity of private sector
20 partners and sponsors such as Joe
21 Viterano, owner of all the Long Island
22 Friendly's restaurants, the History
23
24 Channel, RXR, Canon USA, TD Bank, JJT
25 Energy, Unified Windows, CBS-FM, WBAB,

1 KJOY and B103.

2 The county parks system continues
3 to serve as a strength for Nassau and
4 this is why I have continued my Take Back
5 the Parks campaign. We all grew up
6 playing baseball and lacrosse in our
7 parks. Our children and grandchildren
8 deserve no less. Under this initiative
9 we have reestablished all Nassau County
10 athletic leagues for lacrosse, baseball
11 and softball.

12 I am also proud to report that my
13 administration saved the games for the
14 physically challenged in 2011 by raising
15 private funds needed to keep the games
16 alive. We will do so again this year.

17 In addition to sports and
18 recreation, parks events raise revenue
19 for our county by attracting thousands
20 from the tristate area. Local businesses
21 benefit and these events help support
22 local jobs through hotel stays and
23
24 restaurant visits. These events generate
25 significant sales and hotel taxes for

1 county's coffers while bringing people
2 together from all different backgrounds.

3 This can also be said for the
4 county's car show which attracted the
5 great governor of the state of New York,
6 Andrew Cuomo, in his classic Corvette.
7 It is events such as these that draw
8 outside dollars to be spent inside our
9 county. That's an economic benefit that
10 we must encourage. A dollar spent and
11 respent in Nassau County helps us all.

12 Nassau itself, like our parks,
13 continues to progress. We are not only
14 in a state of fiscal recovery but a
15 recovery of spirit. Nearly two decades
16 ago when the defense industry in Bethpage
17 was downsized Nassau and its residents
18 were not prepared to deal with the
19 economic fallout. That is why I became
20 involved in government. I had a desire
21 to replace jobs lost and help my
22 neighbors recover their spirits.

23

24 As a county legislator I worked to
25 return 15,000 jobs to the former Grumman

1 property and diversified industry at the
2 site. Today the Grumman property is home
3 to the first of its kind in the United
4 States, Homeland Defense Research and
5 Development Center, affordable housing
6 and Nassau's fast growing movie and
7 television industry.

8 Despite these improvements we
9 cannot relent. We must build on these
10 successes and create and retain more jobs
11 if we are going to be ready for the
12 economy of tomorrow.

13 Since taking office as county
14 executive I have focused on attracting
15 new employers and retaining jobs in our
16 county. My administration has
17 facilitated 13 economic development
18 projects that have committed to create
19 1,600 new jobs and retain 1,000 permanent
20 jobs. Collectively these projects are
21 estimated to generate more than 1.3
22 billion dollars in economic activity.

23

24 From diversifying local industry to
25 the creation of workforce housing and the

1 retention of a 100 year old family-owned
2 business, we are making significant
3 strides at improving the business climate
4 in Nassau County.

5 The IDA is currently working to
6 make Mark Fasciano's vision for a Thought
7 Box a reality. The Thought Box will be
8 an integrated commercial residential
9 center designed primarily for technology
10 companies with affordable housing and
11 amenities to provide opportunities for
12 our college graduates. Projects like
13 Thought Box are exactly what this region
14 needs.

15 We must not only focus on the jobs
16 we have but look to create new jobs. For
17 that reason I have invested millions of
18 dollars in local job training and
19 retraining centers through agreements
20 with our towns and villages.

21 While we will work to continue to
22 train our workforce we must build on my
23
24 efforts to attract new jobs and increase
25 county revenue without relying on new

1 real property taxes. That is exactly why
2 I launched Accelerate Nassau Now, a plan
3 that seeks to partner with Governor
4 Cuomo's Economic Development Counsel to
5 launch new development opportunities at
6 the Hub, along with development at
7 Belmont Park on the western end of Nassau
8 and the former navy property to the
9 eastern end of the county.

10 Nassau's Hub, home to Long Island's
11 only major professional sports team and
12 its 200 million dollars of local economic
13 activity, has long been the victim of
14 Long Island's most notable export, the
15 word no.

16 To solve this problem I have
17 challenged developers with
18 privately-financed plans to come forward,
19 and I challenge critics today to become
20 supporters of redeveloping the Hub. I am
21 confident that if we come together we
22 will find a path forward that leads not
23
24 to an empty parking lot but rather to a
25 vibrant center of economic activity with

1 Islanders' banners hanging from every
2 post and the Stanley Cup on display at
3 its heart.

4 To jump start success at the Hub I
5 have challenged the private sector to
6 build a multi purpose expo center at
7 Mitchell Field. I am happy to report
8 that two companies have answered the
9 call. Tonight I announce that I will
10 recommend Nassau Sports, an events LLC,
11 to the legislature to construct a state
12 of the art 105,000 square foot exhibition
13 center at Mitchell Field that includes
14 multi purpose fields, basketball,
15 volleyball courts, a rock wall, high
16 ropes, gym and a fitness center.

17 This project is estimated to create
18 50 jobs, generate millions for the county
19 and benefit the local economy to the tune
20 of 35 million dollars over the next five
21 years. But most importantly this is the
22 Hub's first progress in over a decade.

23

24 Everyone in this room can help
25 create more jobs by urging government

1 officials to work together to create
2 opportunities not just at the Hub but
3 throughout Nassau County. Government
4 officials and civic and business leaders
5 can do much to accelerate the solutions
6 that lead to a brighter future on Long
7 Island.

8 It is an antibusiness, antijob
9 anti-everything climate that we must
10 change as it has created problems and
11 held back progress and we are paying
12 dearly for it. My administration has
13 worked to solve these problems by
14 assisting local businesses. My
15 administration has partnered with Geico
16 and will soon partner with Healthplex to
17 fill 100 private sector job
18 opportunities.

19 We have hosted two well-attended
20 private sector job fares and a third with
21 Family Residences and Essential
22 Enterprises to help those with
23
24 disabilities find a job. In May we will
25 host two additional private sector job

1 fares.

2 My administration also worked
3 tirelessly to support existing businesses
4 with clinics and underwriter workshops.
5 To foster an environment of job creation
6 and innovation I helped create a Nassau
7 chapter of the Inventors and Entrepreneur
8 Club. This organization provides a
9 network for local inventors and
10 entrepreneur to collaborate, learn from
11 experts and avail themselves of county
12 resources.

13 To illustrate the importance of
14 local businesses and local products, I
15 joined with the Nassau Counsel of
16 Chambers of Commerce to launch an
17 extended Spend It, Buy It, Keep it Local
18 initiative.

19 On small business Saturday we stood
20 together to encourage residents to
21 support their local mom and pop shops and
22 my administration has done just that by
23
24 investing federal dollars in downtown
25 business districts such as those in the

1 villages of Cedarhurst, Hempstead,
2 Lynbrook and New Hyde Park.

3 To support larger local employers I
4 launched in 2011 an Employer of the Month
5 Program to recognize good corporate
6 citizens who employ our residents. I'm
7 proud to report that these companies are
8 on the rise in Nassau County and are
9 hiring new employees. Believe it or not
10 government can actually help create
11 jobs.

12 One examples can be found in a
13 compact between the IDA and Grumman
14 Studios. This collaborative effort of
15 government and the private sector is
16 helping to make Nassau the Hollywood east
17 of the movie industry.

18 Movies filmed this year in Nassau
19 include Men in Black III starring Will
20 Smith and Tommy Lee Jones. Phil Spector
21 starring Al Pacino and the Dictatorship
22 starring Megan Fox and Sasha Cohen.

23

24 Last month premiered Man on a
25 Ledge, a film starring Sam Worthington

1 and Elizabeth Banks which was shot here
2 in Nassau County at Gold Coast Studios.

3 Television shows are also being
4 filmed here including Law and Order
5 Criminal Intent, Ringer, Royal Pains,
6 Boardwalk Empire, Celebrity Ghost
7 Stories, The Good Wife and Da Brick
8 directed by Spike Lee.

9 Together these movies and
10 television shows resulted in 704
11 production days in Nassau County. To our
12 benefit the industry spent 90 million
13 dollars in the local economy. It is
14 these jobs and new industries that are so
15 desperately needed and help solve our
16 economic problems on Long Island.

17 Now I ask you all to return to your
18 smart phones and go to the Nassau Now
19 app. As you may have heard, I've
20 launched Nassau Now, our newest
21 state-of-the-art mobile and web
22 application designed to assist residents
23
24 in communicating more efficiently and
25 effectively with county government. I

1 encourage you all to communicate
2 effectively with me now by selecting the
3 comments section and sending me your
4 suggestions. I ask that you please be
5 nice, just like my bus system.

6 My friends, two years ago I pledged
7 to repeal the onerous home energy tax and
8 that was accomplished.

9 I pledged to cut wasteful
10 spending. To date I have cut 200 million
11 dollars in waste, fraud and abuse and put
12 forth reforms that will realize annual
13 recurring savings.

14 I pledge to freeze and fix Nassau's
15 broken property tax assessment system. I
16 have put forth reforms that do just
17 that. All that's required now is a
18 little help from Albany and some
19 bipartisan cooperation here on the county
20 level. Heck, if NIFA and I can agree
21 then surely a few on the other side can
22 join in.

23

24 Finally, I pledge to create jobs
25 and opportunities and my Office of

1 Economic Development, the Nassau County
2 IDA and Accelerate Nassau have created
3 thousands of jobs and opportunities.

4 Over the past two years Nassau has
5 faced many challenges. We have met each
6 challenge without raising real property
7 taxes. In fact, Nassau County has
8 overcome many challenges that counties
9 around the state are just now
10 confronting. While Nassau faces a few
11 more hurdles, most of which can be
12 overcome with bipartisan cooperation, I
13 am confident that we will tackle these
14 obstacles as well.

15 The good news is for the first time
16 in a long time government is addressing
17 its problems. For the first time in a
18 long time government is honestly
19 discussing unfunded mandates, pension
20 reform, health care costs and wasteful
21 practices. For the first time in a long
22 time citizen voices are being heard
23
24 louder than special interests.

25 My friends the good news is we have

1 charted a course for our county that
2 fixes decades of wrong over the next few
3 years.

4 The good news is we can see the
5 light at the end of the tunnel. Let's
6 finally put our differences aside, set
7 our sights on our course in the same
8 direction, the right direction. A
9 direction that leads a great Nassau
10 County for each and every one of us and
11 for generations to come.

12 Thank you all for being here
13 tonight and for withstanding yet another
14 State of the County address speech. It
15 certainly ain't easy.

16 God bless you, God bless Nassau
17 County and God bless America and keep our
18 troops safe.

19 LEGISLATOR SCHMITT: Can I have a
20 most to adjourn? Moved by Legislator
21 Becker, seconded by Legislator
22 Gonsalves. We are adjourned.

23

24 (TIME NOTED: 7:48 P.M.)

25

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7
- 8
- 9
- 10
- 11
- 12
- 13
- 14
- 15
- 16
- 17
- 18
- 19
- 20
- 21
- 22
- 23
- 24
- 25

1 CERTIFICATION

2

3

4

5 I, FRANK GRAY, a Notary
6 Public in and for the State of New
7 York, do hereby certify:

8 THAT the foregoing is a true and
9 accurate transcript of my stenographic
10 notes.

11 IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have
12 hereunto set my hand this 22nd day of
13 March 2012

14

15

16

17

FRANK GRAY

18

19

20

21

22

23