



News From

Maggie Brooks

Monroe County Executive

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BROOKS ADDRESSES IDA REFORM *County Executive Testifies To* **New York State Assembly Standing Committee on Local Governments**

Monroe County Executive Maggie Brooks today traveled to Albany to testify to the New York State Assembly Standing Committee on Local Governments to address new legislation regarding Industrial Development Agency reforms. **County Executive Brooks** joined a panel of Upstate County Executives to illustrate the strong, positive impact Industrial Development Agencies have on our economic vitality and job growth.

“As County Executive, growing our local economy and creating jobs for residents continues to be my top priority and COMIDA is both an outstanding resource and great partner in this effort,” said **Brooks**. *“Our community benefits tremendously from the substantial job growth COMIDA creates and is a great source of pride for Monroe County.”*

County Executive Brooks’ complete testimony:

Good afternoon and thank you for taking the time to hear the views of Monroe County on this critical issue.

Industrial Development Agencies across New York State work to promote, encourage, attract, and develop job opportunities to increase economic development and strengthen local economies. The role of IDAs in New York State has grown increasingly important as we continue to lose jobs and businesses to other states and foreign competition due to a high tax burden and our young people leaving for better opportunities elsewhere.

The high cost-of-doing business in New York State discourages new investments by existing businesses and drives many small and mid-sized companies into the ground, preventing economic growth. High taxes, particularly real property taxes, coupled with rising energy and health costs places New York in a weak competitive position when vying for business. By offering affordable financing and incentives, IDAs help level the playing field for businesses in New York and allows us to remain competitive in the expanding global economy.

The County of Monroe Industrial Development Agency (COMIDA) allows local businesses to make investments in our region, expand and develop their operations, and create and retain jobs for the residents of our community, all of which contribute greatly to the economic vitality of Monroe County.

Since 2004, our economic development division, including COMIDA, has approved 691 projects, inducing \$1.8 billion worth of investments in Monroe County, creating 10,697 jobs while retaining 46,841 jobs for local residents.

Monroe County's local economy is greatly strengthened by its COMIDA projects. Our projects have seen tremendous successes with companies such as Adecco, SenDEC, Zeller, ConServe, and Polychot investing millions of dollars into our community's infrastructure and creating nearly 200 jobs for local residents.

The New York State Comptroller's Office underlined the great success of our IDA in its 2007 Annual Report. COMIDA currently has over 360 active projects. Those companies were required to create 2,098 jobs in Monroe County. In actuality, 17,506 jobs were created - eight times the required amount. Monroe County is ranked second in the State for job creation, behind only New York City. COMIDA's cost-per-job of \$1,182 is also significantly below the State's average of \$4,527.

It is critical that IDAs remain accountable to all levels of government, the business community, our local trades, and most importantly, taxpayers. Because they have the ability to provide tax incentives, IDAs should be held to high standards of integrity and transparency. They should also be required to clearly show the economic benefit of their incentive packages to their respective local economy.

It has been a priority of my Administration to ensure that our local IDA meets these expectations. Shortly after I took office, COMIDA passed a comprehensive local labor requirement that required companies receiving tax incentives through COMIDA to employ 100% local labor. This requirement has positively impacted our local economy by ensuring that COMIDA's economic assistance benefits Monroe County taxpayers and laborers; not out-of-state workers.

More recently, COMIDA expanded its definition of its local labor requirement to include workers residing in several surrounding counties. It is a great source of pride for our community that COMIDA projects are required to utilize our local workforce. In fact, we are one of the few IDAs to require it on all projects. By expanding the definition of our local labor area, we are able to provide greater employment opportunities for workers living in our region.

As a way to monitor compliance with the 100% local labor requirement, COMIDA has contracted with an independent monitoring group that details the number of workers on each job and the counties in which the laborers reside. The monitoring group reports any suspicions of "1099 Abuses" to the New York State Attorney General's Office for further investigation. This measure ensures that companies receiving COMIDA incentives are abiding by the 100% local labor policy and further promotes accountability and transparency to taxpayers.

To further ensure the accountability of COMIDA's decisions, a qualified union representative was appointed to the Board. This appointment adds great value to the decision-making process while giving organized labor a strong voice at the table. COMIDA recognizes the profound impact the building trades have on our local economy and works towards strengthening our local industry by committing \$75,000 annually to benefit industry apprenticeship and training programs.

In addition to job creation, IDAs can help local governments carry out other critical public policy priorities. In Monroe County, we use our IDA to promote environmental protection and "green" building techniques. By offering an incentive program called Green JobsPlus, we induce local companies to include environmentally friendly practices in their construction projects. This program offers incentives to companies whose project has secured LEED Certification status. Not only does Green JobsPlus promote job creation; it has the additional, unique benefit of promoting sustainability for our community.

COMIDA makes every effort to operate efficiently, with transparency and accountability to all levels of government and taxpayers. COMIDA meetings are open to the public and its website includes easily accessible financial information, meeting minutes, and annual reports. COMIDA has made significant strides in implementing the requirements of the Public Authorities Accountability Act of 2005, which has further improved its accountability and transparency.

It is generally understood that some additional reforms are necessary in order to effectively maximize the real value of IDAs. However, given the critical role that our IDAs play in job creation for New York State residents, it is important that our reform efforts continue to facilitate job creation and growth, not impede it. IDAs are a significant asset to New York State when operated effectively and have produced strong, positive results that we have all benefited from.

COMIDA serves as an excellent model for IDAs across the State, not only because of its great successes in growing our local economy, but because it has taken great measures to ensure transparency, accountability, and efficiency at all levels of operation. We are very proud of the economic development work we do through COMIDA and encourage other IDAs across the State to take note of our practices and the many strides we have taken towards local reform. Above all, it remains critical that we continue to work together to strengthen IDAs, with a common goal of creating jobs for our residents and growing our economy.

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