

Chairman Morse, Majority Leader Commisso, Minority Leader Carman, Comptroller Conners, Sheriff Apple, District Attorney Soares, County Clerk Hidley, members of our State Legislative delegation, members of the Albany County Legislature, invited guests and my fellow citizens of Albany County, I thank you for joining me for my State of the County address.

Thank you also to the quartet Into Wishin' from Albany for that inspiring rendition of our National Anthem and to Father Lefebvre for that beautiful invocation.

Four years ago, I began this Administration with the promise and the belief that we could and that we would make a positive difference in the lives of the residents of Albany County.

A promise, that we could and that we would stabilize county finance; make our county safer and more secure; make the delivery of critical County services- to our seniors, to our youth, to our veterans, and to those who are disadvantaged more effective and more efficient.

And a promise that we could and that we would do all of these things without placing any undue burden on the real property tax payers of our County.

Well, tonight I am pleased and grateful to deliver a State of the County message that will tangibly demonstrate that these promises were kept and that as a result the State of our County is strong and that our County's future has never looked brighter.

As I took office, our County's financial picture was bleak. We faced a significant structural deficit; a nursing home that was costing our taxpayers nearly one million dollars a month in unreimbursed expenditures; a workforce that had not seen a cost of living adjustment in years; County programs and services that had been drastically reduced and most disturbing of all, taxes that had been dramatically increased to close significant budget gaps.

But, with your support we quickly began putting into place efficiencies and reforms throughout all of our operations, and as a result, we turned the corner on County finances.

For three years in a row I presented structurally balanced budgets and my administration did it without depleting any County reserve funds or using any budget gimmicks such as “one shots”.

By the end of 2014, we had added over twelve million dollars to our fund balance and we project that the County fund balance for this year will be over forty-two million dollars; an amount higher than any time in the County’s recent history and nearly double the amount of reserve funds when I took office.

Most importantly, for the real property taxpayers of the county, we’ve not only stayed within the State’s tax cap, but for 2015, we passed a budget that provided no real property tax increase and we sent out a message to new residents and to businesses alike, that in Albany County good management, not higher taxes, is the order of business.

As you well know, for years our nursing home was a significant financial strain on County finances, operating as I mentioned, at an annual deficit of nearly twelve million dollars. We initially disagreed on how to solve this problem, but we ultimately came to an agreement on changing the management structure and as a result of efficiencies put into place and the cooperation of our unionized employees, the finances of the nursing home have truly turned a corner.

We’ve reduced our financial subsidy by nearly half and anticipate even further savings within the next two years as we move forward with renovations to the facility that were largely ignored for over a decade.

These renovations will transform living conditions for our nursing home residents, will improve their quality of life and will increase our occupancy rates.

Management of the nursing home is also working with my administration to advance an exciting proposal as part of the Capital Region’s request for State DSRIP funding.

DSRIP, the Delivery System Reform Incentive Program, is the main mechanism by which New York State will implement a redesign of Medicaid to better increase access for all New Yorkers to high quality health care and reduce the overall cost by reducing inpatient hospital admissions.

New York State has allocated eight billion dollars to this five year program. And we are participating in it locally along with major regional health care providers, such as Albany Medical Center Hospital.

It is hopeful that this new initiative will allow us to expand our on-site services to include a Primary Care Health Center. It is expected that the programs at the proposed new Center will include services such as dialysis, radiology, mental health, diabetes, podiatry, hypertension and dentistry.

The Center will permit most resident services to be provided on-site avoiding the inconvenience and cost of transportation to offsite facilities. And, as a Primary Care Center, all of these services can be made available to the broader Albany County community including to the veterans who hopefully will soon be housed at the site of the former Ann Lee Home.

This Center has the potential to provide not only more effective quality of care to our nursing home residents but to residents countywide including County employees and the utilization of this space has the further potential of actually turning our nursing home facility into a revenue generator for the County. Imagine that.

The savings we have achieved to date at the nursing home coupled with the very real possibility of this transformational project, signals very clearly that in Albany County good management and creative thinking are the order of business.

Bringing new money into the County is equally as important as saving money. Economic development over this past year has grown dramatically. We cut the ribbon on dozens of new and expanded businesses and we broke ground for the new Shoppes at Latham Circle and celebrated Capital Bank moving its headquarters to the former Wellington Row. We welcomed a groundbreaking Pharmaceutical Lab to Colonie, opened the Capital South Campus and moved Tech Valley High School to the SUNY Polytechnic Institute.

Additionally, the Albany County Business Development Corporation continued to be a powerful financing tool, helping to fuel business growth in Albany County. Last year, the Al Tech Loan fund partnered with five different banks, a credit union, the Community Loan Fund of the Capital Region and the New York Business Development Corp to approve nearly four million dollars in loans to

support 19 businesses, a record year for helping small businesses grow and expand in our County.

We also opened Schenectady County Community College- Albany right here at 112 State Street and with the siting of a casino in Schenectady, and the college's offering of an associate's degree in Casino and Gaming Management, the college expects its offerings here to grow and to attract many new students.

Like our partnership with SCCC Albany, Albany County has advanced economic development by using different approaches and launching new programs to boost our economy.

Last March, we launched Tweet My Jobs for job seekers and employers in Albany County to utilize the web and mobile apps to provide instant access to more than 18,000 jobs in the region. Social media platforms like Twitter and Facebook have been used to post the openings. And we believe this new app will be a catalyst for job creation.

On the topic of catalysts for job creation, who can forget the excitement we all felt on that Saturday morning in August when the Wellington Hotel Annex came down to make way for a new convention center. We literally witnessed one era end and a new future begin for our downtown and for our region.

The new Convention Center will be tied into the Empire State Plaza and to our Times Union Center. And, in concert with this project, our Times Union Center will be getting a whole new look as well, dramatically enhancing its appeal and the patron experience. The improvements will also give us the opportunity to attract even more big time events like NCAA tournaments, and will attract even more patrons into a revitalized downtown entertainment district.

Speaking of attracting more people to our greater downtown entertainment district, over a year ago Hoffman's Playland... an iconic spot for children and family fun announced it was closing. After more than a year of discussions and searching for the right partner and location, we happily announced in October that the Playland would be moving to property owned by Huck Finn's.

This announcement was welcomed for the revenue and jobs it will keep in the County; for the revitalization it will bring to Albany's warehouse district and of

course for the memories it will create for generations of children and families to come.

I want to again thank our CRC, Albany County Legislator Gary Domalewicz and the Empire State Development Corporation for their help with this project and I know we all look forward to this spring and seeing this project opened. From creating jobs and revenue, to rebuilding our neighborhoods, to being a catalyst for new development... successful economic development is the order of business in Albany County.

The Albany County CRC stepped up to help finance the new ZEN Building at SUNY Poly. This \$191 million project is another major reminder of how what is happening at SUNY Poly has transformed both our region and our world. This financing proposal not only helped Albany County but the city of Albany as well and for that, I want to publicly thank Dr. Kalayeros for his extraordinary leadership and for his partnership with us.

In April, we announced we were establishing the Albany County Land Bank Corporation to end blight and the devastating effects it has on our communities.

To help fund the work of revitalizing our most challenged neighborhoods, we pledged one million dollars over two years that helped leverage a \$2.8 million grant from the NYS Attorney General.

We look forward to continuing to work closely with the Land Bank in revitalizing neighborhoods throughout the County and providing safe, affordable housing. I want to thank Mike Jacobson and the Land Bank Board and the Community Advisory Committee for their incredible effort to date.

As you know, providing safe affordable housing for our Veterans continues to be one of my most important priorities.

We have over 19,000 veterans who call Albany County home. Far too many of them who return from service don't have a home, a job, or even a place to sleep. Some are battling alcohol, substance abuse or other mental health issues. All of them need our help. That is why three years ago we started a partnership with Soldier On to offer programs for local veterans such as the training program they

offer at our County Jail. For its part, Soldier On is raising money for a campus where veterans can get the assistance they need here at home.

Last May, we held a benefit concert for this project, featuring Charlie Daniels and Marshal Tucker. Over \$40,000 was raised. Thank you to everyone who helped with this benefit and thank you to all those involved with the Soldier On effort.

As a veteran, it troubles me that there are servicemen and women looking for work, struggling to feed their families or finding a place to live. We need to do more for the men and women who have served our nation.

Last year, our Veterans Service Bureau provided help to over six hundred veterans looking for services. For the third year in a row we have collected thousands of coats for homeless veterans and their families.

In May we announced the opening of the Michael McNulty Center for Veteran Entrepreneurial Activity at the Watervliet Arsenal. Along with our partners at the Arsenal the County will assist our veterans as they take steps to start a business. If they need help with a marketing plan... they'll get it. If they have legal, financial or strategic questions, they'll get the help they need. I thank all those involved in this effort.

I recently joined Senator Schumer to push for legislation that deals with the issue of the high rate of suicide among service members. The Jacob Sexton Military Suicide Prevention Act expands mental health services for active duty personnel and gives them the help they need to cope with the stresses of everyday life. That bill was signed into law in December. Even better news, in the first few weeks of this year, the Clay Hunt bill was passed to extend this to veterans and was signed into law by President Obama just last week.

Perhaps the greatest challenge facing our Iraq and Afghan veterans is reintegration. The Global War on Terror has now taken ten times as many lives as have the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan. I recently mandated the Albany County Veterans Service Bureau to take suicide awareness and prevention training.

I'd like to take a moment to thank our veterans and everyone who is currently serving in our Armed Forces, we are in your debt. Please know that caring for our

veterans and doing all that we can for them is the order of business in Albany County.

Another of my priorities has been to make sure that we do all that we can to ensure the safety of our children. Two years ago, in an effort to reduce the number of infant deaths caused by unsafe sleeping practices, we launched an aggressive grant-funded media campaign that babies are safest when they sleep alone, on their backs and in their cribs. Going forward, we will continue our efforts with this effective campaign. Two years ago, I also established the Bullying Prevention Task Force that continues to offer programs and training on bullying prevention strategies and on creating a positive environment for our youth.

In October, I signed into law a new effort to prohibit cyberbullying of minors in Albany County. The measure addresses a growing problem facing young people who are victimized through online communication.

Sadly, there have been instances across the country where victims of cyberbullying have given up, ending their life. The high rate of teen suicide is alarming. Last year, Albany County launched the H.O.P.E app. It stands for “Help, Options, Prevention and Education.” It’s a mobile suicide prevention tool, easy to access and free. The app shows many different suicide warning signs and offers contact information for help and support.

Protecting children is also why I signed a law that made Albany County the first in New York State to prohibit the sale within the county of children’s products or children’s clothing containing toxic chemicals.

There are far too many toys and products that our children play with and are exposed to that contain dangerous toxins known to have harmful effects. This law is a step toward making sure that manufacturers and retailers produce and sell safer products. Hopefully it is a call to our state and federal governments to enact similar protections.

In January, we also sounded the call for change in the funding of defense for the poor. The scales of justice are not equal when it comes to those who need legal defense services. Although we have excellent Public Defenders and Alternate

Public Defenders in our County, the resources of their offices are not equal to those available to the prosecution or those who can afford private representation.

There should not be two systems of justice, one for the rich and one for the poor. This is wrong and it must stop.

In 1963, the Supreme Court ruled that states are required to provide legal counsel for the poor. In 1965, New York State passed this responsibility onto the Counties as another underfunded mandate.

I believe it is time for the state to pay for this program to better protect those who cannot afford a lawyer.

That is why I engaged Judge Larry Rosen, whose career has been dedicated to equality and justice, to draft such a law and it is why I am working with Assembly Member Fahy to move this bill through the State Legislature. I thank them both, as well as all of the members of our State Legislative delegation who have shown interest and support in this important legislation. Working together we can get New York State's attention and we can see that justice is done.

We also need to work together to get our New York State Legislature to approve Governor Cuomo's budget recommendations to raise the State's minimum wage to ten dollars and fifty cents per hour.

Sadly 13 percent of the residents of our County live in poverty- for children it is 17 percent; that is simply unacceptable. As the governor said in his budget message- if you work full-time, you should be able to pay for rent, pay for food and not live in poverty. I agree.

Raising the minimum wage is an important step toward the goal of lowering overall poverty rates and studies have shown that states with minimum wages higher than the federal level have job growth that is actually stronger overall than in states with the federal minimum.

In the coming months, we will continue our strong efforts to get our federal and state governments to respond to the concerns we have raised about a critical public safety and environmental justice concern. Specifically, the dramatic growth of crude oil being transported in the County and the proposal by Global to expand

their facilities near the Port of Albany. Yesterday's tragedy in West Virginia sadly demonstrates that we are justified in being concerned about the risks to our County's population, property and resources posed by the very real dangers associated with derailment, fires, spills, explosions or other incidents related to the transportation of crude oil.

Last year, we took action as a result of a request by Global Companies to significantly expand the amount of crude oil shipped through the City of Albany and down the Hudson River and to build a 2,600 square-foot facility with up to seven boilers at the Port of Albany.

In January I sent a letter to the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation in which I called for more information from Global so that there could be a more comprehensive, public and transparent review of the company's plan. A few days later, Governor Cuomo responded to the concerns I and other local leaders raised by directing five state agencies to review safety procedures.

Still, as County Executive I felt more needed to be done to protect the health and safety of County residents. So in March I issued an Executive Order directing Albany County's Commissioner of Health to issue a Moratorium on the expansion of the processing of crude oil at the Port of Albany pending a public health investigation by the Albany County Health Department.

I also created an expert Advisory Committee headed by Peter Iwanowicz, a former DEC acting commissioner, to conduct an investigation and to report on the transportation of crude oil through Albany County and the potential impact a large scale disaster could have on the health, safety and lives of the people of Albany County. Additionally, I called for legislation that would impose jail time and penalties for not reporting spills in a timely fashion.

Along with Mayor Sheehan, I have filed extensive comments with the United States Secretary of Transportation as well as with our State Commissioner of Environmental Conservation.

We have called on Secretary Foxx to exercise emergency authority to address the risks Albany County faces. While phasing out DOT-111's is a positive step, the time issue for implementation of the phase out is still too long.

Also, we have called for the acceleration of the implementation of Positive Train Control.

We have called on the Department to mandate reduced train speed for trains carrying flammable liquids proximate to densely populated urban areas.

We have called for more information for first responders and we have asked the Department to require carriers to provide financial assurance for reimbursement in the event of an incident.

And with regard to Global, we have asked Commissioner Martens to rescind DEC's negative declaration and to require a full Environmental Impact Statement which addresses any and all potential adverse environmental and public health impacts related to this project.

I am pleased that our efforts have not gone unnoticed. Newspapers and journals from across the nation and internationally have reported on what we have done. And in that regard we have helped to amplify the issues and concerns and the need for change.

I believe that as a direct result of our actions there was success getting New York State to extend the public comment period several times to allow for more citizen input.

We need to be sure that any processing and shipping of crude oil is safe and to fully evaluate the impact on the public of air quality and what any expansion of crude oil activities will mean to Albany County residents and to our environment.

You have my pledge that I will continue to speak out on this issue and to make certain that our Federal and State governments address these risks.

I want to take a moment to thank all of the elected officials, community leaders and individuals who have worked with me on this issue, including Peter Iwanowicz, the chair of my special committee.

I particularly want to thank Mayor Sheehan for her partnership with me on this issue and on so many other initiatives and I want to congratulate her on her leadership of our great capital city.

As the Mayor knows, ensuring that we leave the world a better place for future generations starts with local action. That is why since day one I have prioritized making Albany County the greenest County in New York State.

Last February, I signed an Executive Order banning the use of e-cigarettes on county property. This order promotes good health and protects those using our buildings from secondhand vapors.

Also during 2014, I convened a Waste Advisory Council to figure out what could be done to change waste disposal issues on a local level.

The panel is developing proposals to facilitate diversion of organic materials for reuse as soil and fertilizer. This concept could extend the life of waste handling facilities and create a sustainable and beneficial resource for local residents and could result in creating new jobs for a sustainable economy.

I am also pleased tonight to announce the creation of Albany County's new Sustainability Policy. This policy will be used by County employees to help guide new county projects to limit emissions, toxicity and use of energy throughout Albany County.

As part of a green infrastructure initiative, for the last three years we have been working to open a nine-mile stretch of the old Delaware & Hudson Railroad between the Port of Albany and Voorheesville as the Albany County Rail Trail.

Once completed, the Rail Trail will link municipalities along a safe and accessible pedestrian and bicycle route. This past year, the Rail Trail saw significant advancement with sections from Voorheesville to Bethlehem now open to the public and it is anticipated that the majority of the trail will be open for public enjoyment sometime in the fall of this year!

The rail trail's success is attributable in significant part to many volunteer efforts and to our partnerships with all of the communities along the trail. Great partnerships can accomplish great things, and working on building effective partnerships is the order of business in Albany County.

Case in point, Lawson Lake County Park. For years this County resource went largely ignored. But over the course of the last three years we have, mostly

through volunteer efforts, turned Lawson Lake into the jewel of Albany County. Last summer, more day camps were offered by St. Catherine's Center for Children, the Boys and Girls Club of Albany and the Pride Center of the Capital Region.

Cleanup has gone on virtually non-stop with volunteers from the trade, building and construction unions and with help from so many partners including, Home Depot, the Boy Scouts and of course from Albany County Sheriff Craig Apple and District Attorney David Soares.

On September 11<sup>th</sup>, we partnered with New York State and AmeriCorps and had over 500 volunteers do everything from cleaning- up debris to painting cabins. The enthusiasm of so many young AmeriCorps volunteers was contagious, and was one of the highlights of a terrific year and illustrated that the opportunities at Lawson Lake are endless.

Just this past weekend, dozens took part in our first ever "Take a Friend Snowmobiling" event on the park trails. We partnered with the New York State Snowmobile Association and our local school districts to get the word out and introduce children of all ages to this natural winter beauty in Albany County.

This initiative with Sheriff Apple and District Attorney Soares is but one of many times our offices have collaborated successfully for the benefit of County residents.

Tonight, I am announcing what I believe is one of our most crucial collaborations to date, a coordinated, strategic effort to deal with the crisis of opiate addiction in our County. Problems with prescription drugs, heroin and other opiates are as commonplace in our suburban and rural communities as they are in our cities and require a coordinated call to action.

To deal with the crisis we will take a three-part approach that involves Action, Awareness and Progress.

With regard to Action; county law enforcement officials are doing an excellent job coordinating information and resources from Federal, State and Local authorities and will continue to target and cut-off opiate supply to the region.

Our County Health Department will offer Narcan training classes with distribution to the general public twice monthly to afford people on any part of the addiction spectrum: addicts, loved ones of addicts, concerned community members,

educators and others access to and information on this important reversal drug that truly saves lives.

We will also work with local law enforcement, prosecutors, public defenders and the Courts to develop or adapt programs to divert offenders to drug education programs or to social service programs where offenders can seek appropriate treatment as an alternative to arrest or incarceration.

With regard to Awareness, our Departments of Health, Mental Health and Children, Youth and Families will provide outreach to schools including educational pamphlets and posters on warning signs and resources for help including information on New York's Good Samaritan Law and Narcan. Our Department of Health is currently working with BOCES and other partners to ensure that education programs in school districts across the County specifically deal with opiate use.

The Progress aspect of this initiative will involve the creation of an opiate response board that will be tasked with reviewing the implementation of this policy, making modifications as needed and developing additional policies and approaches. Members of this board and the date of a County-Wide Opiate Summit will be announced in the coming days. Through coordinated Action, Awareness and Progress we will do all we can here in Albany County to deal with this crisis.

Literally every day, thousands of Albany County residents are touched by and benefit from programs administered by or sponsored through our county departments. Programs that are innovative, effective and even life changing. Programs that deal with the challenges of poverty, mental illness, child welfare, aging and so much more. Programs designed to create better opportunities for our struggling middle class and poor, so as to improve the quality of life of our community and to make a better future for our children.

On any given day, anywhere from 400 to 800 individuals come through the doors of our Social Services Department for a myriad of protective and preventative social and financial services, as well as for training and child support so that the residents we serve can go on to better, more productive lives.

Also, the Department, along with the Veterans Service Bureau and local veteran organizations has implemented a unique "Veteran Identifier" program to assist veterans and their families in navigating the matrix of DSS services to which they are legally entitled.

Likewise, our Department of Mental Health interacts with hundreds of individuals through a variety of programs designed to assist those dealing with the complexities of mental illness.

During the coming year, the Department, in partnership with our County Probation Department, will participate with the New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services in a unique program that will result in system mapping of community intercept points between the criminal justice system and the mental health treatment system in order to reduce recidivism.

Last month, representatives from my office, our Departments of Health and Mental Health, our County Sheriff, Public Defender and District Attorney, accompanied the leadership of the City of Albany Police Department to Seattle to learn more about that City's drug prevention and arrest diversion program known as LEADS. The program provides law enforcement the option of giving offenders the choice, be arrested or meet with a counselor at a social service agency and avoid the court system all together. Santa Fe recently adopted this model for people addicted to heroin and prescription opiates.

My administration supports this effort and congratulates all those involved for their commitment to this innovative program.

Tonight, I also want to congratulate and thank Doctor Jim Crucetti for 25 years of service as our County's Commissioner of Health.

Our Health Department provides programs and services that effect the lives of every resident of this County. The National Academy of Sciences describes the concept of health as a public good and says that it is "The fundamental duty of government to protect and promote the health of the public." According to the Academy, government has a unique responsibility to do this based upon a constitutional and practical foundation.

I am proud that our health department has embraced this duty as it ensures compliance with the provisions of State law in the areas of Family Health, Communicable Disease Control, Chronic Disease Prevention, Community Health Assessment, Health Impact Plans, Environmental Health and Public Health Emergency Procedures.

I anticipate that the department will also be an active partner in the implementation of projects funded under DSRIP, projects that could further enhance the health of our County.

All of these departments work well because of many factors. Factors such as the effective leadership of our Commissioners and Deputies; the dedication of staff; and very importantly, because these departments collaborate effectively with each other.

Toward that end, we have implemented a system where departments meet in “Clusters” breaking down any silos or territorial boundaries so that they can interact seamlessly and in partnership on strategic initiatives. Again, another example of good government and smart management leading to better results.

As an example, this collaborative approach between the Department of Health and Department for Children, Youth and Families resulted in a single point entry or “One front door” initiative, where all referrals from hospitals, families and community groups will come to one centralized intake and then be matched to the services that will best meet a child or family’s needs.

Our Department for Children, Youth and Families is one of only six departments in the state chosen by the NYS Office of Child and Family Services as a Juvenile Detention Alternative site. The goal of the program is further reducing unnecessary and inappropriate placement of youth in detention, with a particular focus on reducing racial and ethnic disparities within the juvenile justice system.

This initiative will take on even greater importance, if the governor’s proposal, which I strongly support, to raise the age of criminal responsibility to 18 is approved.

So too will our Project Growth Initiative, which is administered through our Department of Law and our Crime Victims and Sexual Violence Center. The initiative, the first of its kind in New York State, provides an important service to victims and a learning experience for juveniles involved in Family Court by providing an alternative juvenile justice process.

Last year our Crime Victims and Sexual Violence Center dealt with over ten thousand victim-client contacts and over twenty thousand units of client service.

The Center is working with the Albany Police Department in assisting victims, families and witnesses with obtaining emergency services and support following an incident of gun violence in their community. The objective of the project is to transform the emotional and psychological response to violence in the community, from revenge to community engagement.

As you know, we've just created, with your approval, the new position of Director of Youth and Recreation Programming within the Department for Children, Youth and Family Services.

The new Director will work in conjunction with local communities and nonprofit organizations to enhance and support programs aimed at recreation and healthy learning activities for youth within our County, particularly in those parts of our County where youth are underserved.

In Albany County, quality programming for our seniors is also the order of business. Our senior residents deserve the very best services we can offer. Toward that end, our County Department for Aging serves nearly 11,000 persons age sixty and older, along with family care givers. Through a variety of programs, our agency makes it possible for individuals to live with independence and dignity in their homes as long as possible, delaying or avoiding higher cost levels of care.

Last year we delivered nearly 140,000 nutritious meals to nearly 800 seniors and nearly 50,000 hours of home care and over 30,000 hours of adult day care.

Our goal going forward is to enhance our nutrition, health and disease prevention programs and to make these programs even more accessible. We are doing just this very thing through our Albany County- New York Connects Single Point of Entry Access Line that is engaging seniors by giving them a better understanding of appropriate and cost effective non-medical support.

Innovative approaches through smart and progressive management. This is exactly what I pledged four years ago and it is what we are delivering every day in every department and in every program within our County Government.

It has been said that good government is an endless pursuit. One that requires constant commitment and unending vigilance. I commit to you tonight that we will never waiver from that commitment. For me that commitment will always be the order of business.

Our late Governor Mario Cuomo once observed, "The philosophy of a government is the pattern revealed by the line that connects hundreds of decisions government makes on a day- to- day basis."

Tonight I've talked about a lot of those decisions- decisions that were far from easy.

About reaching compromise and keeping our nursing home open and about turning around its finances and the quality of life of its residents.

About improving the overall financial health of the county, staying under the cap and not raising taxes.

About not compromising on the delivery of important and vital services that assist our seniors, our veterans, our disadvantaged and our disabled.

And about protecting the health, safety and welfare of the residents of this County- even when some said that we were tilting at windmills.

So connect the lines. The philosophy of our county government has been clear. Government can be, should be and must be a positive force for the good of the individuals we serve.

I began this evening by telling you that was the promise I made four years ago to the residents of Albany County. We have kept that promise and as we go forward we will do even more.

In closing, I want to thank our Governor for his constant support of our efforts. I also want to thank all of the dedicated, hardworking employees of our county government and all of the partners who have collaborated with us in the delivery of vital services to our residents.

And I particularly want to thank each one of you for your efforts to make Albany County as responsive to the needs of our residents as possible- even when we've differed in our approach, we have always essentially wanted that same goal.

But, most importantly I want to thank our residents for their own involvement and commitment to our County- they are the ones who make Albany County so special.

Thank you all for joining me this evening and may God bless Albany County and may He bless our great Nation.