



NEWS FROM THE OFFICE OF
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**WARNING FROM ALBANY COUNTY: DON'T PLAY POLITICS WITH
COMPTROLLER'S OFFICE**
**ALBANY COUNTY COMPTROLLER WEIGHS IN ON HEIN'S PROPOSED ELIMINATION OF
AUERBACH'S STAFF**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

KINGSTON, NY (November __, 2012)... In an emphatic letter to County Executive Mike Hein and the Ulster County Legislature, Albany County Comptroller Michael Conners warns of the dangers of cutting Ulster's audit staff. His position is stated primarily as a warning against eliminating the independence of the Comptroller's Office, and suggests that Hein's proposed slashing of the claims audit staff is motivated in part by a deliberate effort to consolidate executive power and limit Auerbach's effectiveness.

Hein's 2013 Budget proposes to move three claims audit staff from Auerbach's Office to the Finance Department. The move has been justified by a change in the Charter language, just approved in the November 6 election. That language "officially" moves the duty of "chief accounting" officer from the Comptroller's office to the Finance Director.

"The Charter language is smokescreen for this move," says Auerbach. "The accounting function, including the general ledger of revenues and expenses has always been the responsibility of Finance. As a matter of fact the Commissioner of Finance went on record stating that his department has always maintained all accounting records. Our function is to audit, and you can't audit your own books. So the Charter language change corrects an error in the Charter, it doesn't change anything on the ground. It's being used as an excuse to weaken our ability to do the job the People of Ulster have entrusted to us, and that's what Mike Conners says in his letter."

Conners' letter suggests that Executives may be tempted to cut audit staff as retaliation for the function of a Comptroller to act as a check and balance to Executive power. He warns that such political gamesmanship only acts to put the County in danger. Conners does leave open the possibility that the move was motivated in good faith, but urges the executive and the Legislature to reverse the proposal.

"We are very pleased that Mr. Conners felt so strongly about the risks of the proposed cuts that he would turn his attention for even a moment to comment on what's best for Ulster County. We hope that the legislature sees this letter, and all of the objective facts that make the issue so clear, as sufficient grounds to take a stand for Ulster."

The letter can be found on line at www.ulstercountyny.gov/comptroller

The mission of the Ulster County Comptroller's Office is to serve as an independent agency of the people and to protect the public interest by monitoring County government and to assess and report on the degree to which its operation is economical, efficient and its financial condition sound.