

# Lt. Gov. Robert Duffy assails pension tier detractors

On a cross-state swing championing Gov. Andrew Cuomo's budget plan, Lt. Gov. Robert Duffy on Thursday challenged naysayers of a proposed less-generous state pension tier to come up with something better.

"Anyone who can come up with an alternative plan that would save the taxpayers of this community \$2.5 billion over the next 30 years, the governor would love to listen," Duffy said, referring to the governor's projected savings for Monroe County with the new pension plan.

"There is some resistance to it," the lieutenant governor conceded later, "but there is not resistance from people who put budgets together" like county executives and mayors.

His remarks followed stiff resistance to the proposed sixth tier of the state pension system a day earlier in Albany from public employee unions and lawmakers, some of whom declared the change all but dead during this year's budget negotiations.

At the offices of the Rochester Business Alliance, where Duffy made his case for the budget after stops in Syracuse and Utica

earlier in the day, elected officials from Rochester and Monroe and Genesee counties rallied behind the governor's \$132.5 billion spending plan.

In addition to trimming spending by \$225 million over the current fiscal year, the plan seeks to address a major concern of local governments in having the state gradually take over yearly increases in Medicaid expenses that are now shouldered by counties and New York City.

The state projects that the Medicaid takeover would save Monroe County \$28.3 million over the next five years and Genesee County \$1.5 million over the same period.

Overall, the state estimates, mandate reforms in the budget would save Monroe County \$36 million over five years.

Monroe County Executive Maggie Brooks, a vocal critic of unfunded mandates — or state and federal requirements that do not come with state or federal dollars to help

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localities pay for them — called the spending plan "the right budget at the right time."

"The county governments, more than any other, really understand the impact of mandates," Brooks said.

Standing at a podium, Rochester Mayor Thomas Richards swept a hand upward mimicking the trajectory of the city's pension costs.

"If it keeps going like this, we'll be out of business," Richards said.

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