



Mark C. Poloncarz In His Own Words

Erie County Comptroller Stefan I. Mychajliw vows to do more with less by voluntarily cutting his own budget and reducing staff positions to low levels not seen since the Red/Green Budget Crisis

Buffalo - When Mark C. Poloncarz served as Erie County Comptroller he vilified and even took the former administration to court for making cuts to the office of the taxpayer's watchdog, including proposed cuts to Poloncarz's Chief of Staff position, auditors and accountants. Here are Mark C. Poloncarz's own words, when he was highly critical of proposed cuts to the Office of Comptroller:

"They're vindictive, because he goes after my secretarial staff and my chief of staff. He doesn't have to like me, but I would hope that he at least respects the office."

Source: Mark C. Poloncarz, "Comptroller Criticizes Collins' 2011 Budget," YNN.com, Nicki Mayo, 10/13/10

"In effect, the county executive is trying to end the oversight of him and others by this office. He is trying to kill the independent taxpayer watchdog. He is trying to eliminate the checks and balances required by the Erie County Charter."

Source: Mark C. Poloncarz Press Release, "In Display of Vendetta Politics At Its Worst, Collins Once Again Targets Comptroller's Office for Deep Budget Cuts, Layoffs," 9/30/11

"These cuts were politically motivated calculations to undermine the credibility of the Comptroller's Office."

Source: Mark C. Poloncarz Spokesman Peter Anderson, "Poloncarz Blasts Collins' Campaign," The Buffalo News, Robert McCarthy, 9/24/11

"He is trying to beat me into submission. If he has cut my office 33 percent, he is doing it out of spite."

Source: Mark C. Poloncarz, "Collin's Budget Proposes 223 Layoffs," The Buffalo News, Matthew Spina, 10/1/10

"This is a dark day in Erie County government."

Source: Mark C. Poloncarz, "Comptroller's Office Reduced from 7 to 2 Auditors," WIVB.com, Eli George, 12/14/10

"While the County Executive is cutting some spending, his cuts are arbitrary and in many cases clearly punitive."

Source: Mark C. Poloncarz, "One Part Spite, One Part Smoke and Mirrors," Artvoice, Geoff Kelly, 10/13/10

"In launching his (Poloncarz's) suit against the county executive last month, Poloncarz argued that the Erie County Charter gives elected department heads authority to propose and manage their own budgets and also protects them from severe staff cuts."

Source: "Poloncarz to Revisit Suit Over Budget Cuts," The Buffalo News, Matt Gryta, 12/17/10

"If these jobs are not restored, my successor will be unable able to do the work. It (proposed cuts) had nothing to do with running government. It had everything to do with politics."

Source: Mark C. Poloncarz, "Poloncarz Seeks Restoration of Comptroller's Office," The Buffalo News, Denise Jewell Gee, 11/14/11

"With today's actions the county executive is trying to end the oversight of him and others by this office. He is trying to kill the independent taxpayer watchdog."

Source: Mark C. Poloncarz, "Collins Budget Calls to Cut Jobs and Auditors," WBFO.org, Michael Mroziak & Eileen Buckley, 10/1/10

"The Erie County Comptroller's Office actually has the most responsibility of any county comptroller in all of New York State."

Source: Mark C. Poloncarz, "Collins 2012 Budget Eliminates 300 Jobs," WIVB.com, Al Vaughters, 9/30/11

"The county executive said he was going to do a twenty percent across the board cut in the discretionary spending areas. He didn't even do that. He did twenty percent or greater of my office, thirty percent, thirty-six percent in areas he didn't like."

Source: Mark C. Poloncarz, "Poloncarz Blasts Proposed County Budget," WKBW.com, 10/13/10

"(The) County Executive has no right to interfere with my Charter mandated ability to do my job. As a result, we are seeking legal remedies in court as well as working with the county control board to make sure we can continue to fulfill this vital function for the people of Erie County."

Source: Mark C. Poloncarz, "Mark Poloncarz Part II," NewWNYPolitics.com, Glen Gramigna

"When the word started getting out yesterday (about cuts) I talked to my employees about it and some of them were visibly shaken."

Source: Mark C. Poloncarz, "Collins Calls for Budget Cuts," YNN.com, Mark Gruba, 7/27/10

Poloncarz is calling the...budget a "display of vendetta politics at its worst."

Source: WBFO.org, "County Comptroller Critical of Collins," WBFO Newsroom, 9/30/11

"He's (the County Executive) trying to kill the office of the watchdog."

Source: Mark C. Poloncarz, "More Than 400 Jobs Cut in Collins' Proposed Budget," YNN.com, Jon Dougherty, 10/1/2010

"Poloncarz is accusing the county executive of targeting opponents with his budget."

Source: WKBW.com, "Comptroller Critical of Proposed Erie Co. Budget," 10/13/10

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NEWS RELEASE

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IN DISPLAY OF VENDETTA POLITICS AT ITS WORST, COLLINS ONCE AGAIN TARGETS COMPTROLLER'S OFFICE FOR DEEP BUDGET CUTS, LAYOFFS

Two Weeks After Identifying Nearly \$3 Million in Savings, Collins Gives All But One Auditor Pink Slips, Also Shows Tax Accountants and Poloncarz's Chief of Staff the Door

ERIE COUNTY, NY—Today, Erie County Comptroller Mark C. Poloncarz released the following statement after learning that, once again, Chris Collins has chosen to target the Comptroller's Office for deep budget cuts in order to exact his political vendetta.

"Although deeply disappointed, it is not surprising that Chris Collins continues to put petty politics and exacting personal vendettas ahead of Erie County taxpayers. The fact that he has, once again, specifically targeted my office for deep cuts, this time weeks away from an election, could not be more transparent."

"In effect, the county executive is trying to end the oversight of him and others by this office. He is trying to kill the independent taxpayer watchdog. He is trying to eliminate the checks and balances required by Erie County's Charter so that he can run the county in any way he sees fit, regardless of whether the county is able to function as a result.

"Last year, after Collins gutting my office the first time, we were able to restore 8 of the 15 positions through funding from an ECFSA efficiency grant. In awarding the grant, ECFSA Chairman noted the significant role my office plays in identifying tangible cost savings, and believed Collins arbitrary cuts were made for 'inappropriate reasons.'

"Yet, because that was a one-time-only funding source, by refusing to restore these positions in this year's budget at my request, Collins is effectively cutting nearly all of them once again.

"While my office assumes more responsibility than any other elected Comptroller's Office in the state, we are still the target of this county executive's budget cuts year after year. When Chris Collins took office the Comptroller's Office had 48 employees, now due to his vindictive cuts in this year's budget, we will be down to only 29.

"Again he specifically targeted my award winning audit division, taking a strong but still-undersized audit department of six people (one less than a year ago) and reducing back down to two: the audit

deputy and a staff auditor. Most billion dollar entities have audit divisions of more than 30-40 people, now; Erie County will have one of 2.

“Restoring only one actual auditor effectively ends any and all oversight of the Collins administration. It is obvious he doesn’t see the value everyone else sees in our work. It could not be more obvious that this is nothing more than a political calculation to try to minimize the outrage Collins was met with last year.

“Despite the Collins administration’s absolute refusal to cooperate with any work being done, so far this year, auditors have identified nearly \$4 million in future tax dollar savings, which includes the \$2.9 million in savings from curbing out of control overtime costs in Jail Management by hiring 67 additional deputies and corrections officers identified just two weeks ago.

“I am proud of the more than 60 major audits and reviews my audit division has conducted and the millions of dollars of waste and abuse of tax dollars uncovered as a result.

“Collins constantly claims my auditors are incompetent and their audits are a complete waste of tax dollars, yet every time he has actually implemented our findings it has resulted in significant savings. For example, Collins lauds the more than \$2 million residents have saved this year because of the Prescription Drug Discount Program we suggested he create in December 2008. Additionally, this year he finally followed my auditors’ recommendation to turn the City of Buffalo lockup back to the city, and if he had done that sooner he could have saved an additional \$1.6 million, but unfortunately he waited more than three years before doing so, wasting millions of tax dollars.

“He also shows his complete disregard for other local governments by cutting the key personnel who monitor and ensure that Erie County’s property taxes are collected. In effect these cuts guarantee that not only the county will be unable to collect taxes, but all town and city governments who rely on these individuals to assist them in their tax collection duties are unable as well. That is utterly irresponsible and shows the reckless nature of his administration.

“And while Collins believes both he and his chief of staff is each worthy of their own secretaries, he doesn’t believe I am worthy of either a secretary or a chief of staff—cutting both for a second time.

“It is utterly obvious that these cuts have nothing to do with ‘running Erie County like a business,’ and everything to do with trying to hurt your political rival weeks before an election. And while Collins attempts to exact his political revenge, he continues to hurt the taxpayers in the process.”

Background

In his proposed 2011 County Budget last year, County Executive Collins arbitrarily eliminated funding for 15 (out of 42) positions in the Comptroller's Office, including nearly all of the County's internal auditors. This represented a 36% cut in the Comptroller's staff. The Legislature restored funding, which the County Executive, subsequently declared ‘null and void.’ After the Legislature failed to override the County Executive’s veto, 8 of the 15 positions (6 auditors and 2 property tax accountants) were restored for the year by the Erie County Fiscal Stability Authority through state efficiency grant funds.

Because the ECFSA’s efficiency grant was a one-time-only funding source, failure to return the 8 positions to the County’s budget would result in layoffs. In July, Poloncarz submitted a budget for the Comptroller’s Office that included the restoration of 9 of the 15 positions (the Comptroller’s secretary and 8 efficiency grant funded positions) originally deleted by Collins last year. Of the nine positions requested, only two were restored while Collins cut the associate deputy comptroller for a second time.

Positions Restored:

- **2 Staff Auditors:** Although two staff auditors were restored, one of those positions does not participate in the internal audit function of the office. The position's sole responsibility is to monitor the County's health insurance payments to ensure there are no overpayments made. This means the Comptroller's award winning Audit Division now only consists of two people: the Deputy Comptroller – Audit, and one staff auditor.
- **Junior Tax Accountant:** Although restored, this position appears to have been transferred to the Department of Real Property Taxation.

Positions Not Restored:

- **4 Auditors:** This includes the Senior Auditor, 1 staff auditor and 2 accountant auditors. This year alone, this still-undersized division identified nearly \$4 million in taxpayer savings and their previous work has led to an additional \$2 million in savings through the Prescription Drug Discount Program.
- **Supervising Tax Accountant:** With one accountant transferred and one deleted this completely wipes out the property tax collection function of the office, which will significantly impact not only the County's but also the individual cities', towns', and villages' ability to collect property taxes.

Positions Requested, Not Granted:

- **Comptroller's Secretary:** In effect, this position served as liaison to the Legislature, however since it was cut in the 2011 Budget, my Associate Deputy Comptroller has had to fill that role. Both the County Executive and his chief of staff have their own secretaries, yet the Comptroller does not. Additionally, the County Executive has a staff member that works primarily as his liaison to the Legislature.

Current Positions Cut:

- **Associate Deputy Comptroller:** This position was cut by Collins last year but then restored by the Legislature with available funding from a retirement. Not only does this position serve as chief of staff, responsible for managing all personnel operations within the Comptroller's Office, but also serves as communication director and liaison to the Legislature and all other local, state and federal government entities.

The deep budget cuts come just weeks after the Comptroller's Office issued a review of overtime at the Erie County Holding Center and Correctional Facility that identified **more than \$2.9 million in savings over the next 5 years** through the hiring of 67 additional deputies and corrections officers. This brings the total savings that the Comptroller's Office has identified or been directly responsible for to more than \$6 million in 2011.

Since his election as Erie County Comptroller at the height of the 'Red-Green' fiscal crisis in 2006, Poloncarz has taken his promise to serve as the taxpayers' independent watchdog seriously and dedicated his administration towards creating a more efficient Comptroller's Office and restoring fiscal stability to County's government. He has released more financial statements and reports than any of his predecessors, including, for the first time, the issuing of comprehensive and detailed quarterly reports on Erie County's finances, and under his tenure the Audit division was awarded the prestigious "Knighton Award" from the Association of Local Government Auditors in 2008, the first time a local government auditor in New York had ever been awarded such an honor.

Additionally, Poloncarz has shaped the Audit Division into an Inspector General-like organization that stops and prevents abuse of County taxpayers' dollars. The Audit Division has conducted more than 60 major audits and reviews which have identified more than \$30 million in cost savings.