



## News from the Office of ERIE COUNTY EXECUTIVE MARK POLONCARZ

### NEWS RELEASE

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### **POLONCARZ ANNOUNCES RETURN OF RODENT CONTROL PROGRAM**

*Reinstatement of Highly Successful Public Health Program Means Bad News for County's Rat Population*

**ERIE COUNTY, NY**— Today, Erie County Executive Mark C. Poloncarz announced the reinstatement of Erie County's Rodent Control Program. The highly successful program, administered by the Department of Health, will begin responding to rodent complaints beginning **tomorrow, Thursday, March 15, 2012**.

Poloncarz was joined at the announcement by Erie County Legislators Betty Jean Grant, Lynn Marinelli, Tim Hogues, Tom Loughran and Tom Mazur, who were critical of the prior administration's decision to end the program and have advocated for its restoration.

"As a candidate, I talked about how county government should aim to provide the services that residents want as efficiently and effectively as possible and not just do the bare minimum mandated by law," **said Poloncarz**. "Reinstating the Rodent Control Program makes good sense, both from a health perspective and from a savings perspective. Rats don't respect property lines or town lines, and now residents will have assistance from the County in their efforts to track and eliminate them."

At the suggestion of then-County Executive-elect Poloncarz, the Legislature included \$369,848 to the 2012 Adopted Budget to restore the Rodent Control Program—36 percent of which (approximately \$133,000) will be reimbursed by New York State. The restored funding will primarily go towards the costs of personnel to perform rodent baiting and proactive neighborhood blitzes, a clerk to handle complaints, service requests and documentation management, and supply/material costs for bait and related equipment. Currently, the Department of Health's Public Health Lab maintains two employees who are only permitted to investigate and enforce rodent control issues.

**Poloncarz continued**, "With warm weather already upon us, I would like to congratulate the members of the Health Department for getting the program up and running quickly and thank the members of the Erie County Legislature for working with my administration to help restore this vital public health program."

Funding for the Vector and Pest Control Program, which included rodent baiting and trapping on private property, was eliminated by former-County Executive Chris Collins in the 2011 Budget. At the request of the Erie County Legislature, \$70,000 in federal Stimulus funding was allocated in the form of local grants for municipalities interested in providing this public health service to residents.

However, it was later discovered that due to explicit New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (“NYSDEC”) regulations, this funding could only be used by a local municipality to gain the proper certifications and permits to apply rodenticide, not actually administer a program or purchase supplies. It would cost each local municipality more than \$2,000 in certification fees (\$1,150 for each additional employee certified) alone per year to maintain a local level program. That means if all 44 of Erie County’s local municipalities chose to initiate their own rodent control program, it would cost local taxpayers more than \$90,000 in certifications alone, while only costing approximately \$10,000 for certifications for the County to administer a countywide program.

None of that funding has been released and will go towards reducing the local share of administering the reinstated program this year.

**Poloncarz added,** “In addition to being vital to public health, this program is very cost-effective. Taxpayers will see significant savings as the County provides this service, rather than their town or village, which may not be able to afford to obtain the necessary permits and certifications to legally administer vector control.”

Poloncarz went on to remind County residents that they too can take measures around their homes to reduce the risk of rodent infestation, including:

- If your municipality has yet to use totes, make sure that your garbage is stored in covered containers at all times;
- Do not feed your pets or any animals outside the home;
- Remove sources of water from your yard;
- Thoroughly clean area of pet droppings daily;
- Immediately clean any fallen seeds from birdfeeders and only use rodent-proof and spill-proof birdfeeders;
- Keep yards free of trash;
- Clean areas behind wooden steps, under decks or any other area that may provide shelter;
- Pile wood and other storage materials away from walls and at least 18 inches above the ground;
- Check to see that windows and doors are closed tightly;
- Place heavy screening on all basement windows;
- Seal any holes in your home’s foundation; and,
- Fasten floor drains to keep rats from entering through sewers.

The fully-staffed program, which will include 7 pest control workers, 1 senior pest control worker and 1 administrative clerk, is expected to handle between 3,000 and 4,000 complaints this year. Residents who encounter rodent issues are encouraged to call the County’s Department of Health at (716) 961-6800 or visit [www.erie.gov/health](http://www.erie.gov/health) for more information.

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