



BOLTON FEB 29 2012

ERIE COUNTY LEGISLATURE
HON. LYNNE DIXON
LEGISLATOR

GA

February 29, 2012

The Honorable Christopher L. Jacobs
Erie County Clerk
92 Franklin Street
Buffalo, New York 14202

RE: Reported Service Backlog in the County Clerk's Office

Dear County Clerk Jacobs:

On January 26, 2012, an article appeared in The Buffalo News entitled, "County Clerk focuses on backlog of documents awaiting verification." This article was my first glimpse at a problem that could soon grow to a major liability for the county. As I understand it, a few years ago the County Clerk's Office made an operational change to the way the office processes the receipt and return of documents. The decision was made to transfer more document clerks from back office operations to the cashier/customer service counter in order to make wait times shorter. In reality, the shorter wait time to start a process led to historically long wait times at the end of the process. As I'm sure you are aware, this has created a great deal of frustration amongst many professionals who use your office to file documents.

The article mentions the possibility of expired checks existing in a backlog that exceeds 96,000 documents. Some brief analysis of the County Clerk's performance based budget breakdown has me concerned that there may be a potential for hundreds of thousands of dollars in uncashed checks waiting for deposit in unopened envelopes. If this is true, the current problem of a customer base annoyed with long wait times may escalate when the process halts again because of an expired check.

I appreciate that you are new to the Office of County Clerk and I do not write to assign blame or give the appearance that I am not satisfied with your response to the apparent organizational problem. In fact, thus far I am quite impressed with the smooth transition that has taken place under your direction, and I always have a good experience working with you and your staff. I do, however, write in my capacity as a legislator with some responsibility to perform oversight of county departments on behalf of my constituents. With that said, it is my request that you appear before the Legislature's Government Affairs Committee to discuss the backlog, how it occurred, how it is being handled, and what steps are being taken to ensure it does not reoccur.

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I will be in touch with Government Affairs Committee Chairman, Legislator Thomas J. Mazur, to request his cooperation on this matter. With your consent, and at his direction, you will be invited to attend a future meeting of the committee to address this important matter. Should you have any questions regarding my request, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,



Lynne M. Dixon
Erie County Legislator
9th District

cc: Hon. Thomas J. Mazur
Majority Leader
Government Affairs Committee Chair
Hon. John J. Mills
Minority Leader
Hon. Betty Jean Grant
Chair of the Legislature