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ERIE COUNTY LEGISLATURE

HON. JOHN J. MILLS
CHAIRMAN OF THE LEGISLATURE
11TH DISTRICT LEGISLATOR

August 5, 2016

Dear Comptroller Mychajliw,

Thank you for your previous communications regarding County Attorney Michael Siragusa's hiring of outside counsel regarding Majority Leader Lorigo. As you undoubtedly recall, opinions were sought as to whether Mr. Lorigo could hold positions of both an Erie County Legislator and West Seneca Town Prosecutor.

Notwithstanding the validity of those opinions, there has been considerable discussion on this issue since Mr. Siragusa testified at the Legislature about his role in the process of hiring outside counsel in June of this year. Mr. Siragusa's testimony was full of inconsistencies and documented falsehoods. Furthermore, his answers were not direct or clear, but created more questions than answers.

Hiring Kavinoky Cook, LLP (the County Executive's former employer) to investigate a Legislator, regardless of who made the decision, will remain an example of unethical and inappropriate practices seeking to benefit a political agenda at the expense of the taxpayers. This incident, as well as a series of other incidents, has made it difficult to trust that the Legislature is treated fairly, impartially and honestly by the County Executive and his hand-picked County Attorney.

Unfortunately, the decision to hire outside counsel has resulted in approximately $25,000.00 in legal fees to Erie County taxpayers. Despite being an inappropriate use of power, a binding contract was entered into between Erie County and Kavinoky Cook, LLP. As such, these legal fees must be paid and I therefore ask the Comptroller's office to remit payment. To be clear, this request does not condone or endorse the wrongdoing that I believe occurred.

I appreciate all the work that you have undertaken to examine this matter. I firmly believe that taxpayers should not have to pay for poor decision making on behalf of elected officials. Therefore, we must work to ensure that something this egregious does not happen again.

Sincerely,

Chairman John Mills
Erie County Legislature

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