



Rensselaer County Legislature

OFFICE of the MINORITY

Tourism Makes Cents!

Troy Record
Pulse of the People

Dear Editor,

Creating a dedicated fund from existing revenues to promote tourism in Rensselaer County will attract tourists' dollars here --- to help businesses and reduce the burden of our high property taxes. It will do so without raising taxes.

Fellow county legislator Flora Fasoldt and I have sponsored a resolution to establish this dedicated fund to promote tourism following tremendous input from the county's Tourism Council, a group of civic-minded citizens representing the arts, culture and businesses throughout the county.

Unlike neighboring counties, Rensselaer County has no portion of its "bed tax" dedicated to tourism promotion. The "bed tax" is a surcharge added to hotel bills. Over \$340,000 in tax revenue is expected from the tax this year alone. As it stands now, these tax dollars go directly to the county's general fund to pay for daily operations. Neighboring counties, Albany, Schenectady and Saratoga, each dedicate a portion of their "bed tax" to tourism promotion, giving them a competitive advantage over us when attracting business and events.

Studies indicate that without a dedicated fund to promote our Rensselaer County attractions, we will remain a county of missed opportunities. The New York State Association of Counties (NYSAC) reports that, "For every \$1 invested in the promotion of tourism, another \$7 is generated in return." A recent study by the state's I LOVE NY office shows that European travelers have a renewed interest in visiting upstate New York due, in part, to our declining dollar. The bottom line --- Rensselaer County needs to move proactively to attract these visitors to increase revenues and reduce taxes.

Unfortunately, Republican legislators Laura Bauer and Robert Mirch voted against this resolution in committee, preventing it from going to the full Legislature for discussion. While the Republican Majority continues to say "no" to new initiatives that will enhance revenues, Rensselaer County taxpayers suffer.

Tourism makes sense and County Executive Kathy Jimino and the Republican Legislative Majority need to do things differently, especially after a decade of property tax increases. The same old approach will produce the same old results and it just doesn't make cents!

Peter Grimm
Rensselaer County Legislature
District #1 - Troy