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NEW YORK STATE LEGISLATURE

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Galef and Oppenheimer Applaud Cuomo's Signing of Local Court Consolidation Bill

*Law Allows Unified Village and Town of Ossining Court to Reduce
Expenses and Inefficiencies*

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Today, Governor Cuomo signed a bill (Chapter 146) that allows for a new, more efficient court system to begin in Ossining. Assemblywoman Sandy Galef and State Senator Suzi Oppenheimer, have championed the bill, which permits the consolidation of the Town and Village of Ossining courts to serve the municipalities as one, while improving court efficiency and saving taxpayer dollars.

"I am so pleased that the Town and Village of Ossining will finally be able to carry out their plans to create one court system after all their hard work in conjunction with the New York State judicial system," Galef said. "This legislation will allow for significant monetary savings, which would be a wonderful outcome for our taxpayers and the municipalities, especially in the current economy."

Senator Suzi Oppenheimer said, "This court consolidation law fulfills a goal that Assemblywoman Galef and I have long shared – making the business of government more efficient and less costly. I am happy for the Town and Village of Ossining who worked together to put the needs of taxpayers and court patrons first."

Previously, the Town of Ossining and Village of Ossining shared many overlapping services and responsibilities for residents of the town, but no unified court system. The lack of unification between the two courts has led to not only confusion, but to an inefficient system and unnecessary expenses. The signing of bill A8120/S5533 allows the Village court to merge with the Town court without significantly affecting employment.

Administrative Judge Alan Scheinkman, who was instrumental in working out the fine points of the merger with the two municipalities, added, "We are very excited that the Town and Village of Ossining with the approval of the state legislature have taken an enormous step forward in court consolidation. We welcome this very innovative opportunity."

Ossining Town Supervisor Catherine Borgia said, "The Governor's signature is another milestone in the historic merger of the Town and Village of Ossining Courts. The Town and Village are looking forward to providing more efficient judicial services to all Town residents at a lower cost once the courts are merged on January 1, 2012. We hope this merger will serve as a model for other communities interested in court consolidation. I thank Assemblywoman Galef, Senator Oppenheimer and Judge Scheinkman, and especially Governor Cuomo, for their assistance in this effort to benefit Ossining taxpayers."

Village of Ossining Mayor Bill Hanuaer said, "The Governor's signature on this legislation flags the final lap towards the goal of the consolidation of the courts of the Town and Village of Ossining. Representatives of the two communities are working to prepare for it in as condensed a period as possible to ensure crossing the finish line at midnight on New Years Day 2012. In reaching that objective, the Ossining community will continue to lead others in New York State in the consolidation of services, efficiency, and savings."

The signing of the bill is certainly a notable achievement for Senator Oppenheimer and Assemblywoman Galef. Both worked at length to develop the court consolidation legislation, taking into consideration the objectives of both the town and village officials. There was no opposition from the town or village, who are looking forward to saving financially and eliminating inefficiencies.

"The signing of the bill is an important step forward for the town and village. This law will hopefully be used as a prototype for other municipalities to follow in Ossining's footsteps," concluded Galef.

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