



TOM CILMI
Suffolk County Legislator
10th District

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Cilmi to DiNapoli: Our pockets are already empty.

Suffolk Legislator Tom Cilmi (R-East Islip) announced today that he is sending a letter to New York State Comptroller Tom DiNapoli expressing the County's inability to absorb any additional increases in pension contribution rates.

At a meeting of the New York Conference of Mayors this morning, NYS Comptroller Tom DiNapoli reportedly announced that the state's pension fund is unlikely to hit its 7% return target this year. It is unclear whether that will mean increased contribution rates for local governments.

Cilmi said, "I certainly hope the Comptroller doesn't look to local governments for additional funding. Suffolk County has already amortized nearly \$300 million of prior years' pension obligations. We are being crushed under the weight of required contributions. This year, in addition to the required contribution, Suffolk will pay roughly \$30 million in debt service on the amortized portion of our prior obligations. For the past several years we haven't been able to afford increases. We are already hurling toward a fiscal cliff. An increase in contribution rate will surely accelerate the process."

In 2003, Suffolk's required pension contribution was just \$13 million. This year it will exceed \$250 million, Cilmi said.

"It's completely unsustainable. Something has to change," he said. "The taxpayers can't afford it; the government can't afford it. This is a problem that has consequences for just about everyone. Our ability to provide services is diminished as a result of increased pension obligations. We are unable to adequately staff critical functions, like our 9-1-1 call center, for example. That means fewer employees have to try and pick up the slack and, at the County level at least, there's just no more to give."