



# NEWS FROM THE OFFICE OF ULSTER COUNTY EXECUTIVE MIKE HEIN



## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **ULSTER COUNTY EXECUTIVE MIKE HEIN DELIVERS 2016 STATE OF THE COUNTY ADDRESS**

### **The County Executive Presents An Innovative And Bold Ulster County**

Stone Ridge, N.Y. – With innovation and boldness the themes of the night, Ulster County Executive Mike Hein delivered his eighth annual State of the County Address at SUNY Ulster to a full house of residents, business owners, and State and local dignitaries. The County Executive detailed many of the ways his administration has been reinventing and reforming local government but stated that more work needs to be done. He requested advocacy and action from the Legislature and expressed a willingness to “put everything on the table” and work with town and City officials to create a new model that delivers efficient services while protecting taxpayers for generations to come.

“The State of the County is strong! Today we have a dramatically different government than we had in the past because we worked together. We are not afraid to put forth bold and innovative ideas. We did not seek to just stay within the tax cap but we actually lowered taxes. Taxes are down, spending is down, unemployment is down, private sector job growth is up and there is more access to critical services for our citizens than ever before, all because, collectively, we were courageous enough to reinvent the government and reject the status quo,” said County Executive Hein. “Instead of a government on the edge of insolvency which was where we started, we are now ranked the most fiscally sound County government in our region by the State Comptroller’s Office. The County reduced spending by over \$32 million and I am pleased to report that adjusted for inflation, property taxes are actually less than they were back in 2007. We are providing more services than ever before. Simply put, embracing innovation and change works.”

To highlight what is possible, the County Executive was joined by awarding winning actor, director and producer Mary Stuart Masterson. Ms. Masterson lives in the Hudson Valley and, along with her entertainment group, is one of several filmmakers interested in creating major production facilities in Ulster County. This has the potential of bringing millions in sustainable investment to the community and drastically expanding our creative economy. However, although New York State currently offers a 10% tax credit to most upstate counties to compete for film and television productions, Ulster County is inexplicably not included. “We need our County and State Legislators to join me in a strong bipartisan effort to level the playing field so that film and other media production can thrive in Ulster County,” said County Executive Hein.

Embracing innovation and boldness while balancing fiscal and social responsibility has resulted in amazing changes for the community:

- Taxes are down, spending is down, unemployment is down, job growth is up, and there are more services than ever before;

- The new Kingston Center of SUNY Ulster opened with no tax burden on County residents, providing inner-city youth with access to higher education;
- The Patriots Project provided housing to 32 formerly homeless Veterans;
- The Ulster County monument honoring all fallen service men and women dating back to the American Revolution was dedicated;
- An unprecedented \$30 million commitment to invest in public infrastructure for 2015 and 2016 was made, allowing for the rebuilding and upgrading of bridges and roads throughout the County and which will result in a doubling of the number of miles normally paved;
- A new and more comprehensive Meals on Wheels Plus Program for seniors was created which eliminated waiting lists, improved food quality and added a Senior Care Coordinator to help seniors in need remain independent in their homes;
- The segmented rail trail compromise was finalized;
- As the first county in New York State to become “Net Carbon Neutral,” Ulster County was recognized by the United States Environmental Protection Agency with a 2015 Green Power Energy Award;
- All County light fixtures were replaced with LEDs, water bottles were replaced with energy efficient water fountains, electric charging stations were installed at various County locations, and 100% of the County’s electricity was purchased from renewable resources;
- Ulster County committed to installing over ten acres of utility scale solar at the SUNY Ulster Stone Ridge campus as well as the former landfill in the Town of Ulster, and set an ambitious goal of having the Ulster County government become 30% energy-independent; and
- Central Hudson agreed with the County Executive to offer electric car charging stations to private sector businesses and tourism destinations in Ulster County at a fraction of the regular cost, in order to attract more companies, millennials and tourists to the County.

Serious challenges to the County remain:

- The overall regulatory system within the County needs to be evaluated and improved upon to protect taxpayers; and
- The County Executive wants to “put everything on the table” to ensure that services are delivered more efficiently.

The County Executive called for important actions to be taken by the Ulster County Legislature:

- Pass cyberbullying legislation to protect our children;
- Create a long term sustainable Solid Waste Policy;
- Pass animal protection legislation with a responsible Breeders Law;
- Decide where to relocate the Ulster County Family Court; and
- Serve on the County Executive’s Task Force with the Fire Chiefs to site the new multi-million dollar Fire Training Center to benefit and support first responders.

County Executive Hein noted additional areas upon which the Legislature must advocate for critically needed State or Federal legislation:

- Extend New York State’s Entertainment Tax Credit to include Ulster County in order to attract film studios and other new media production. This will allow for the creation of hundreds of high quality tech based jobs and bring millions of dollars to our local economy;
- Require large commercial pharmacy chains to take back the unused portions of the narcotics they sell in an effort to help address the harmful impacts of opioid and heroin addiction through prevention;

- Address the Pilgrim Pipeline and potentially catastrophic oil trains that travel through our community;
- Provide oversight for Airbnb-style facilities as currently exists for hotels; and
- Reform the Shovel Ready program to modernize this important economic development tool.

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For 2016 State of the County Speech and Presentation please visit  
<http://ulstercountyny.gov/executive/state-county>