

Dear County Executive Poloncarz, Chair Meyers, Clerk Owens, and Members of the Erie County Legislature:

I respectfully request that Erie County place the new full property-tax exemption for veterans who are permanently and totally disabled because of military service on the public legislative agenda, obtain a fiscal-impact estimate, and take a vote on the record.

My understanding is that New York law now permits counties, towns, villages, cities, and school districts to adopt this exemption for their own taxes. I also understand that Erie County legislators have already begun discussing local action on this issue. That is encouraging, but this should not drift or be resolved quietly. The public should know where Erie County stands, how many families may qualify, what the fiscal impact would be, and what timeline applies before the next taxable-status date.

I also ask the County to take a leadership role with local municipalities and school districts. Even if Erie County adopts the exemption for county taxes, disabled veterans will still face significant town, village, and school-tax burdens unless those jurisdictions also consider adoption. Erie County should encourage every local taxing jurisdiction to put the issue on an agenda, request the numbers, and vote on the record.

There are legitimate questions about cost, budgeting, and how exemptions affect other taxpayers. Those questions should be answered publicly with facts. But silence and inaction are not adequate answers.

Erie County regularly honors veterans at public ceremonies and community events. This is an opportunity to match those words with a transparent public decision for veterans whose service left them permanently and totally disabled.

I respectfully request that Erie County:

1. advance the exemption for public legislative consideration;
2. publish a fiscal-impact estimate and estimated number of qualifying properties;
3. vote on the record; and
4. urge towns, villages, cities, and school districts throughout Erie County to conduct the same public review.

Thank you for your consideration and for your service to Erie County residents.

Respectfully,
Robert B. Richardson
Lancaster, NY