

## ROCKLAND COUNTY MAY LOSE JOBS, RAISE TAXES AND CUT HEALTH SERVICES



The citizens of the state of New York are already facing some serious potential cuts to their services, but it could get even worse for some people in the Lower Hudson Valley area as county jobs are not only going to be potentially cut by the state, but by the county itself. In addition to the job losses, which are health care related primarily, the area residents would also have to deal with a tax hike. Talk about being caught between a rock and a hard place. The plan, which was created and introduced by C. Scott Vanderhoef, the Rockland County Executive, would dump an additional \$160 onto the tax bill of every resident, in addition to the normal taxes they already pay, should the proposed 2012 budget pass. What is interesting is that these costs are not part of the normal tax hike. Due in part to a recently enacted New York state law, the county cannot add more than 2% to the property taxes in any given year. This will amount to a small tax change, under \$20, for most of the residents in the area. While the county is upping the property taxes by the maximum percentage, they would also like to add a \$160 surcharge to the budget. The reason for that significant tax surcharge? IT is to help to pay off a \$18 million loan that the county took out in order to prepare for the sale of a local medical facility, Summit Park Hospital and Nursing Care Center. The loan has to be repaid during the beginning of 2012. The real kicker is that the sale has yet to go through, so the county has none of the revenue that the sale would bring in, and all of the expenses of running the facility. Adding insult to injury, the plan calls for the funding allotted for critical community health services, including the nursing home, acute-care unit and mental health care clinic, are slated to be cut off in August. This means that when the facilities close more roughly 453 health care workers will be out of work. The new budget also calls for about 91 of the counties workers to lose their jobs as well. This would bring the total number of county workers laid off in this area since 2008 to a total of 350. These 91 loses will come from the following cuts to county services: -The closure of both the Rockland County Adult Home and the Rockland County Guidance Center. - The complete elimination of several health programs, including the prenatal clinic at Nyack Hospital , as well as a cancer prevention program. - The privatization of all of the security and housekeeping jobs for the county Department of General Services. - The defunding of the county Tourism Department. - The elimination of vacant postings that the county is currently talking about hiring for, roughly 230.5 full time equivalents. Will the budget pass,? Well, that all depends on how the county board votes.