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PRESS CONTACTS:  
THE EMPIRE CENTER: TIM HOEFER (518) 434-3100  
THE BUSINESS COUNCIL: MICHAEL MORAN (518) 465-7511

## **Benchmark study provides New Yorkers valuable information**

New Yorkers can now compare and evaluate per-capita spending and tax rates for counties, towns, cities and villages using a new online database developed by The Business Council's Public Policy Institute and the Manhattan Institute's Empire Center for New York State Policy.

The Benchmarking New York tool includes per-capita spending and tax totals for 16 categories as well as effective property tax rates and debt levels. The database includes information for 1,604 localities, excluding only New York City. The data is derived from 2007 local government finance reports compiled by the office of state comptroller, and can be used to rank and compare spending, tax, and debt measures for one or more local governments. Benchmarking New York can be accessed at <http://seethroughny.net/OtherData/Benchmarks/tabid/98/Default.aspx>.

"Businesses have long known the benefits of benchmarking—measuring performance against standards set by competitors and peers," said Business Council President and CEO Kenneth Adams. "This tool will allow taxpayers to measure government performance in the same way—highlighting differences and trends between localities. It also provides a framework for helping localities to more effectively compete, attract jobs and promote economic growth."

E.J. McMahon, director of the Empire Center for New York State Policy, said: "By giving taxpayers the information they need to ask smarter questions, the Benchmarking New York database will promote a more-informed public discussion of the forces driving high local taxes in every corner of New York." He said the database will be updated annually at the Empire Center's SeeThroughNY transparency website, and that comparative school district information will be added soon.

Benchmarking New York was welcomed by Attorney General Andrew Cuomo, who has boosted transparency with his Project Sunlight website ([www.sunlightny.com](http://www.sunlightny.com)) and has promoted home rule reforms allowing voters to seek consolidation of duplicative local governments and services.

"Benchmarking New York compliments my own efforts to give the tools to New Yorkers to find efficiencies and empower communities to reform their local governments," Cuomo said. "This smart new resource provides useful information on local governments in every corner of the state. I applaud the creation of this powerful new tool that gives the people of the state a broader understanding of how their tax dollars are spent."

State Comptroller Thomas DiNapoli, whose Open Book website ([www.openbooknewyork.com](http://www.openbooknewyork.com)) makes available the source data used by Benchmarking New York, also applauded the project.

"The more New Yorkers know about how their government works, the better and more accountable their government will be," DiNapoli said. "Every dime counts, especially when they're taxpayer dimes. Last fall, my office posted local government information on our Open Book New York Web site. Benchmarking New York is the next step forward. It's a powerful new Web tool that opens the door and lets the public see how their local governments are spending those dimes. My office will continue to cooperate with Benchmarking New York to ensure the site has up to date information for every New Yorker to examine."