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Audit Identifies Unresolved Issues with County Take Home Vehicle Policies

Nearly all the problems identified in a 2015 investigation persisted until new administration began corrective action

MINEOLA, NY – The Office of the Nassau County Comptroller today released a follow-up audit of the County’s take-home vehicle policies, finding that nearly all the problems from a previous audit in 2015 remained unresolved until the new administration took corrective action. The report found that there was:

- No central oversight of the county’s take-home vehicle fleet.
- Drivers who had access to these vehicles weren’t routinely having their information entered into a state database to ensure they were licensed.
- There was no formal policy in place to ensure vehicles were returned in a timely manner after an employee retires, resigns, or is terminated.

“A lack of oversight puts taxpayers at real risk, as Nassau is self-insured and would be held liable for the actions of individuals who could be operating a County-owned vehicle without authorization or even without a valid license,” Schnirman said. “These are problems that can be resolved by supervisors taking basic measures to hold employees accountable. We are happy the work of our auditors has already resulted in changes being made by the administration when they were notified of the issues.”

“Transparency in our government is a priority for my administration,” County Executive Laura Curran said. “We must restore faith in government. The efforts of Comptroller Schnirman and his team are an important step towards this goal.”

This audit, originally initiated by the previous administration, followed up on a 2015 audit of the County’s take-home vehicle policies. The findings of this in-depth report reinforced the need for Schnirman’s new policy of following-up on all new audits after six months to monitor if auditees are actively taking corrective action steps to resolve issues.

“This audit is a great example of why our office set a new policy to always follow-up on audits after six months to see if our recommendations are being followed. Government needs to be better—it shouldn’t take two full-blown audits for common-sense changes to be made,” Schnirman said.

“Thankfully, after these problems were again brought to light, the new administration has begun taking corrective action – this is what good government looks like.”

During the investigation, the lack of centralized fleet management required auditors to piece together information between departments to determine the correct number of County-owned vehicles and develop a master list who is authorized to drive them. In one instance, a contractor had

been authorized to use 71 County vehicles without first providing a list of approved drivers. In addition, more than 20 percent of drivers failed to acknowledge the County's online vehicle policy.

Additional findings included:

- The County lacked a centralized procedure to ensure employees leaving County employment return their take-home vehicles;
- Department heads did not review vehicle needs regularly

Based on dialogue with the County Executive's Office, significant operational improvements are being implemented to protect the County and ensure recommendations are promptly enforced, with multiple corrections made as soon as the audit team provided an initial list of findings.

As with all audits, the findings will be forwarded to the Nassau County District Attorney's Office.

A copy of the audit and a user-friendly report overview can be found online at:

www.nassaucountyny.gov/audits. The report overview and redesigned executive summaries are new features that will accompany every audit to increase accessibility.