



NEWS

From the Office of the New York State Inspector General
Joseph Fisch

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Governor David Paterson Selects Inspector General Joseph Fisch to Head Stimulus Oversight Panel

*State Panel Will Serve as an Independent Stimulus Watchdog
to Prevent Waste, Fraud and Abuse*

From the Governor's Press Release:

Governor David A. Paterson today announced that he has appointed a stimulus oversight panel to further his commitment to ensuring that federal economic recovery funds are utilized with transparency and accountability. The oversight panel will work to prevent waste, fraud, abuse and mismanagement. It will also work to ensure benefits are distributed in an equitable, non-discriminatory manner. The new panel will be headed by the State Inspector General Justice Joseph Fisch, and will include the State's Medicaid Inspector General James Sheehan, the Inspector General of the Metropolitan Transportation Authority Barry Kluger and State Division of Human Rights Commissioner Galen Kirkland. The panel will provide New York with a coordinated and efficient approach for oversight of federal American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) spending.

"The funds provided by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act are critical to New York's future," said Governor Paterson. "We are tracking every dollar that comes from Washington, D.C. to ensure that the funds are used exactly as President Obama directed – to put people to work quickly, and to make lasting improvements to our State. These three Inspectors General and Commissioner Kirkland have the credentials, the expertise, and the experience necessary to prevent, detect and deter fraudulent, wasteful and abusive practices, in addition to pursuing misdeeds after the fact."

State Inspector General Justice Joseph Fisch said: "I applaud Governor Paterson for his action in the creation of this stimulus oversight panel and am honored to have been appointed to head it. I appreciate the responsibility entrusted to my

office and look forward to fulfilling the vital mission of ensuring that federal stimulus monies will be used with the utmost honesty and efficiency and in a manner that will benefit all New Yorkers.”

State Medicaid Inspector General James Sheehan said: “Just as my staff seeks to prevent fraud, waste and abuse in the Medicaid program and preserve integrity in Medicaid, Governor Paterson has made the commitment to ensure that federal stimulus funds are protected. Our office has access to sophisticated data mining tools, investigative resources, audit expertise, and, above all, a highly trained staff. We are honored to have been selected to participate in this crucial oversight effort.”

Inspector General of Metropolitan Transportation Authority Barry L. Kluger said: “I am pleased to commit the investigative and audit resources of my office, as well as our considerable experience, to help ensure that the economic stimulus funds are used wisely, and in a manner secure from fraud, waste abuse and mismanagement.”

Division of Human Rights Commissioner Kirkland said: “The Division of Human Rights welcomes the opportunity to play an active role in the development of mechanisms for oversight, civil rights compliance and transparency to ensure that constituents most severely affected by the economic crisis will receive their fair share of benefits. I commend Governor Paterson’s efforts to insure these government funds are distributed carefully, without discrimination, to help workplace hiring and training policies that further greater workforce diversity in all industries and businesses.”

Allegations of alleged corruption, fraud, criminal activity, conflicts of interest, abuse or discrimination will go directly to the Office of the Inspector General. Complaints can be made by phone (1-800-DO-RIGHT), e-mail inspector.general@ig.state.ny.us, or by written letter to: State Inspector General, Empire State Plaza, Agency Building 2, 16th Floor, Albany, New York 12223. Complaints can also be completed through the State Inspector General’s website: <http://www.ig.state.ny.us/complaints/fileComplaint.html>.

This new model will draw on the strengths of the four existing offices, leveraging their expertise and combining their commitment toward achieving the highest standards of honesty, accountability, and efficiency in State government. They will make use of all the tools available to them – from prior audits and investigation findings to sophisticated data-mining software. They will also coordinate with the

federal, State and local prosecutors and enforcement agencies on matters that warrant their attention.

Commissioner Kirkland will ensure compliance with federal and State civil rights laws preventing discrimination in the use of funds and employment of workers; meeting Minority and Women Business Enterprises (MWBE) and Disadvantaged Business Enterprises (DBE) requirements of the ARRA and the State are followed and free of waste, fraud and abuse; making sure that stimulus monies are distributed to support employment free from unlawful discrimination; and effective monitoring of the funds and benefits. The toll-free number for the Division of Human Rights is 1-888-392-3644.

The panel will make recommendations to the Governor regarding actions that State Agencies should take, based upon previous Inspectors General findings, Office of the State Comptroller (OSC) audits and internal reviews, and federal and state non-discrimination requirements, to eliminate vulnerabilities in the contracting and oversight of ARRA funds.

Governor Paterson also announced major improvements to the State's economic recovery website, www.recovery.ny.gov, that make it easier for New Yorkers to track stimulus spending, find information on local projects, and learn about available job opportunities.

The new economic recovery mapping application displays certified stimulus projects from data provided by each State agency administering one or more recovery act programs. When a user clicks on a project on the map, an information box appears, providing its descriptive and fiscal information. In addition, whenever available, the information box also contains links to the administering agency's web page with specific project information and to the State Comptroller's Open Book New York website for contract details. Another feature is a link from each project to the State Labor Department's Job Bank, providing an easy way to locate job openings near each project site.

The New York State Office of Cyber Security and Critical Infrastructure Coordination (CSCIC) collaborated with the OSC, and with the State Office for Technology to develop this application to help keep the public informed about the locations and status of certified stimulus projects across the State. Providing connectivity between the State's Economic Recovery website and Open Book combines Governor Paterson's commitment to transparency and accountability

with Comptroller DiNapoli's efforts to promote openness and give taxpayers better access to the financial workings of government.

State Comptroller Thomas P. DiNapoli said: "New York will be spending billions of federal stimulus dollars in the next two years. These funds provide New York with an extraordinary opportunity to move our State's economy forward. We must make sure that every dime counts, and that New Yorkers can follow those dimes as they're spent. Through the Governor's Web site and my office's Open Book New York Web site, New Yorkers will clearly see where and how federal stimulus money is being spent in New York."

CSCIC Director William Pelgrin said: "We are pleased to support Governor Paterson's commitment to transparency in government. Through his leadership, important information about the State's economic stimulus projects will be conveniently available to all New Yorkers."

New York State Chief Information Officer and the Director of the New York State Office for Technology Dr. Melodie Mayberry-Stewart said: "Under Governor Paterson's leadership, OFT is proud to support the New York State Recovery Cabinet's website www.recovery.ny.gov and provide New Yorkers with tools for measuring and tracking State stimulus expenditures."

The map uses the State's Critical Infrastructure Information System, a state-of-the-art geographic information system that utilizes hundreds of mapped data layers, in combination with Google Maps for map display and searches, as well as integration with Google Earth for more advanced searching and display. An easy-to-use Excel spreadsheet export function allows users to download the underlying data, enabling unlimited ways to examine, analyze and make use of project-specific information.

There are currently 267 projects in the economic recovery mapping application. As additional ARRA projects are certified, they will be added.

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