



# Warren County Legislature Presentation

Legislative and Rules Committee

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*It is the law to ensure county government is providing fair and equal representation, but it makes sense to change the county organization if there is the belief county government can be improved to provide better service and save money.*

A weighted voting system is used at monthly board meetings to account for the legal issue of equal representation ...

## Examples:

- Chester:
  - 3,355 population
  - 5.1% of the county population
  - 51 out of 1,000 votes
- Queensbury:
  - 27,901 population
  - 42.5 % of the county population
  - 425 out of 1,000 votes

## Take a closer look ...

- Chester Town Supervisor Craig Leggett:
  - 513 votes in the 2015 Chester town wide election
  - He represents 100% of Chester when placing a board vote
  - 51 votes on the board or 5.1% of the county population
- Queensbury Town Supervisor John Strough:
  - 4,230 votes in the 2015 Queensbury town wide election
  - He has only 20% of the voting rights on the board for Queensbury (1 out of 5) even though he runs town wide
  - 85 votes on the board represents 8.5% of the board votes, but he represents 42.5% of the population

**This is not one person, one vote.**

The five Queensbury supervisors run in 100% of Q'bury, but only get 20% of the town's vote on the full board.

Municipality/Position	Supervisor	Election Votes	Board Votes
Q'bury Town Supervisor	John Strough	4,230	85 or 8.5%
Q'bury At Large Supervisor	Rachel Seeber	4,088	85 or 8.5%
Q'bury At Large Supervisor	Doug Beaty	3,733	85 or 8.5%
Q'bury At Large Supervisor	Ron Montesi	3,126	85 or 8.5%
Q'bury At Large Supervisor	Matt Sokol	3,068	85 or 8.5%
Lake George Town Supervisor	Dennis Dickenson	658	53 or 5.3%
Warrensburg Town Supervisor	Kevin Geraghty	638	62 or 6.2%
Bolton Town Supervisor	Ron Conover	534	35 or 3.5%
Chester Town Supervisor	Craig Leggett	513	51 or 5.1%
Glens Falls Ward 3	Claudia Braymer	386	57 or 5.7%
Glens Falls Ward 2	Peter McDevitt	383	57 or 5.7%
Lake Luzerne Town Supervisor	Gene Merlino	341	51 or 5.1%
Horicon Town Supervisor	Matt Simpson	321	21 or 2.1%
Glens Falls Ward 5	Matt MacDonald	278	42 or 4.2%
Johnsburg Town Supervisor	Ron Vanselow	264	36 or 3.6%
Thurman Town Supervisor	Evelyn Wood	255	19 or 1.9%
Hague Town Supervisor	Edna Frasier	227	11 or 1.1%
Stony Creek Town Supervisor	Frank Thomas	224	12 or 1.2%
Glens Falls Ward 1	Dan Girard	155	38 or 3.8%
Glens Falls Ward 4	Jim Brock	118	30 or 3.0%

The rest of the board runs in 100% of their town or ward, and they get 100% of the town or ward vote on the full board.

**This is not one person, one vote.**

Power is in the committees. Almost every resolution that comes out of committee is passed by the board.

- As of Dec. 14, 2015 out of the 671 resolutions that went to a vote by the full board only 3 did not pass (3 others were tabled).
- 99.1% of the resolutions in 2015 passed when they got to the full board.

**If there is one person, one vote then this situation would be OK, but there is not one person, one vote.**

## Committee representation

- Each supervisor in committee is assigned one (1) vote equally regardless of population.
- One (1) vote out of 20 equals 5% for each supervisor, but supervisors represent towns from 1.1% to 42.5% of the population.
- This more than doubles four of the supervisors voting power in committee who are from towns that have less than 2.5% of the population.
- The impact on the five Queensbury supervisors collectively is cut by nearly half (42.5% board votes goes to 25% in committee); a situation that is much worse if you look at them individually.

**This is not one person, one vote**

Committees in the past have been dominated by the 10 up-county town supervisors who represent 35.1% of the county population.

- In 2015, Queensbury/Glens Falls representing 64.9% of the population:
  - 9 committee chairmanships (37.5%)
  - 67 committee seats (42.7%)
- In 2015, up-county representing 35.1% of the county population held:
  - 15 committee chairmanships (62.5%)
  - 90 committee seats (57.3%)
  - Powerful positions of Chairman of the Board, Budget Chairman and Finance Chairman.

## Why is this?

Note: I have not analyzed the changes to the committee structure in 2016.

## Warren County is a Hybrid Government

- The current Board of Supervisors with 20 members is a mix of eleven (11) town supervisors and nine (9) “legislator” type supervisors - four (4) Queensbury at Large Supervisors and five (5) Glens Falls Ward Supervisors.
- 11 town supervisors and 9 “legislative” supervisors come at the job from very different positions.

## Town Supervisors

- Town supervisors make the case they are best equipped to represent their towns at the county because they are keenly aware of the particular problems facing their town.
- Town supervisors hold town meetings at night so they want to hold county meetings in the day.
- In 2015 the ten up-county town supervisors each held at least one chairmanship and served on between 9 – 14 committees (with the exception of the Chairman of the Board and Budget Officer).
- Only the Queensbury Town Supervisor did not hold a chairmanship in 2015 and served on less than 9 committees (he served on 7 committees – still a lot).
- Note: Supervisor Strough has stated publicly his demanding schedule at the town limits his involvement at the county.

## At-large and ward supervisors

- Queensbury at-large and Glens Falls ward supervisors (who aren't retired) have day jobs making it difficult to attend meetings in the day.
- All four Queensbury at-large supervisors have real, demanding day jobs.
- It's a fact: This limits involvement in committees and attendance at committee meetings.
- This is a major issue considering 99% of the resolutions get approved at the board meetings.

**This needs to be addressed or otherwise this situation will continue at the county.**

The Glens Falls Mayor is not on the Board of Supervisors.

- The second largest municipality in Warren County is the only municipality without Chief Executive representation on the Board.
- Note - The Lake George Village mayor also does not serve on the county board, but the village is part of the Town of Lake George while Glens Falls stands alone.

# Weighted voting in committee

- What not to do ...
- Trying to establish a weighted voting system in committee would be a mathematical quagmire.
- The only solution that is realistic and meets the one person, one vote criteria in the constitution is to create equally divided districts.

But to fix the current board would require extreme measures:

- Town populations vary from 1.1% to 42.5%.
- To comply with federal statute the concept of “at large” representation, if taken to the extreme of even representation across all supervisors, the board would increase in the number of county supervisors to **90!**
  - $1.1\% \times 90 = 99\%$
- **90 equally divided districts at 1.1%.**
- **This would comply with one person, one vote.**

**Of course this is a situation that is not practical or desirable.**

**Evenly divided districts under the current board system and/or a weighted voting system in committee is not the answer.**

# Proposal

- A legislature would fix this hybrid form of government.
- Nine (9) equally divided voting districts for Warren County with each legislator getting one (1) vote.
- This would take Warren County to nine (9) legislators or one legislator per 7,200 people. The largest county in New York Suffolk has 18 legislators or one legislator per 83,000 people.
- The current Warren County Board of Supervisors with 20 members is paid a combined \$350,000 per year. This new legislature would cut this expense in half saving potentially \$170,000.
- With a legislature committee meetings can be held at night so people who work during the day have the opportunity to attend.
- Town supervisors would have the opportunity to focus on their towns, which rightly so are their priority.
- The county is a complex operation with a \$150 million budget and multiple departments. Legislators would have the opportunity to focus on the county.
- There is now the opportunity to substantially reduce the number of committees and committee meetings making county government more efficient and less expensive to run.

Municipality	Population	Population	Votes
Lake Luzerne	5.10%		
Stony Creek	1.20%		
Lake George	5.30%		
District Total		11.6%	1
Hague	1.10%		
Horicon	2.10%		
Bolton	3.50%		
Chester	5.10%		
District Total		11.8%	1
Warrensburg	6.20%		
Johnsburg	3.60%		
Thurman	1.90%		
District Total		11.7%	1
Glens Falls Ward 1		11.2%	1
Glens Falls Ward 2		11.2%	1
Queensbury Ward 1		10.6%	1
Queensbury Ward 2		10.6%	1
Queensbury Ward 3		10.6%	1
Queensbury Ward 4		10.6%	1
Total		99.9%	9

## Recommendation

Warren County establish a Government Study Committee made up of citizens from a cross section of life who represent the county geographically, and who can provide an objective review.

This includes exploring the idea of an elected County Executive.

*I offer this presentation, not as the final word on what would be best for the County, but rather a starting point for discussion, to be amended, as the discussions go forward. Hopefully through logic and reason an agreement can be forged.*

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