

Comptroller DiNapoli Visits IMAGE Magazine

Incumbent New York State Comptroller Thomas P. DiNapoli paid a visit to IMAGE Magazine, where he met with members of the editorial staff. Up for discussion were areas of mutual interest to the Jewish community and the State Comptroller's Office. DiNapoli used the opportunity to emphasize the strong connection he had cultivated with the Jewish community over his 20 years as a member of the New York State Assembly, which was further strengthened over his three year tenure as State Comptroller.

Thomas P. DiNapoli is the 54th Comptroller of the state of New York and was formerly the Chairman of the Assembly Environmental Conservation Committee. He is a Democrat from Long Island and has been active in politics since his teenage years, when he ran for and won a position as a representative to the Mineola Board of Education. At 18, DiNapoli was the youngest per-



Left to right: IMAGE Publisher Ben-Gurion Matsas, Comptroller Thomas DiNapoli and IMAGE Managing Editor Steven Matsas

son in state history to win a school board seat. After studies at Hofstra

University, he worked for New York Telephone.

He applied to be State Comptroller to replace Alan Hevesi, who resigned in December 2006. On February 7, 2007, in a joint session of the New York State Legislature, DiNapoli was elected by a vote of 150 to 56.

In lieu of a transition committee, he established a commission to review the Comptroller's office. The commission was headed by former Mayor of New York Ed Koch and financial expert Frank Zarb.

In March 2007, as one of DiNapoli's first public statements as Comptroller, he criticized Governor Eliot Spitzer's proposed budget, stating that the levels of spending were at an "unsustainable rate." DiNapoli stated that at the rate proposed by Spitzer's budget there

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Comptroller DiNapoli with members of the Jewish community

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would be a \$13 billion deficit within three years' time. He is up for election in November 2010.

Comptroller DiNapoli began his visit at the IMAGE offices by meeting with Publisher Ben-Gurion Matsas and the editorial board. He began the conversation by noting the frequently overlooked importance of the comptroller's office, often obscured by the large bureaucracy of state government. He then detailed the tasks undertaken by his office which is in charge of controlling all funds in NY State, internal auditing, unclaimed funds, and generally serving as the chief fiscal officer in the state. This impacts directly the funding provided by the state to Jewish institutions and organizations. For many struggling through this difficult economy, the funds supplied by the state are the lifeblood that keeps them afloat. It is therefore essential to have a comptroller both competent, and cognizant of the real life issues that are involved in the flow of government funding.

As Comptroller, DiNapoli makes periodic, public reports on a variety of issues affecting state, local, and charitable agencies. In March 2010, he reported that non-profits had been hurt by the recession as well as by delays in state contracts. By April 2010, he gained a reputation as a critic of the state's budget deficit and proposed major reforms in the state budget process. He unveiled a package of proposed reforms to the budget process in March 2010. Key parts of his plans involve governors identifying plans to erase budget deficits in future years, to cap state debt, and to require excess surpluses to be deposited into the rainy day fund.

After recounting the responsibilities of the comptroller, the conversation then moved to DiNapoli's recent actions regarding fund divestment. This was in reference to his announcement that NY State would divest over 86 million dollars from nine companies currently doing business with Iran and Sudan, and freezing seven others.

In his statement on the decision he said, "Iran is supporting terrorism, it's trying to become a nuclear power and its president has made public statements that amount to an incitement to commit genocide by calling for the destruction of Israel."

The move was hailed by members of the Jewish community and human rights activists worldwide as an exemplary act of boldness by DiNapoli, showing that doing business with countries that either support terrorism or conduct genocidal acts would not be tolerated. The visit ended on a positive note with members of the editorial board thanking DiNapoli for his strong support of Israel, and for all the good work that he has done on behalf of NY State and the Jewish community. □