



The Raja Plan for Modernizing Government

A County Government for the 21st Century

Executive Summary

The world has changed dramatically in the past decade. For Allegheny County to be competitive in the 21st century we must adapt to these changes. For too long governments of all sizes have been living beyond their means. They have relied on one time infusions of money from the state and federal government while selling off public assets to fill the holes in the budget. With municipal debt increasing coupled with decreasing revenues, it is time for a change. Additionally, we are wasting time and money through government inefficiencies. Government agencies are not accountable, technology is outdated, the county sees too many duplicative services and our quality of life is threatened.

The Raja Plan for Modernizing Government takes an innovative approach towards improving the way that Allegheny County government serves its citizens. As a business leader, Raja knows how to properly balance budgets to ensure the long term viability of his company. As County Executive, Raja will do the same. Raja will fight to ensure that government spending is reined in, eliminating overoptimistic revenue projections and preventing wasteful expenses. Other ways that Raja will work to improve local government is to make government more efficient by bringing accountability to all aspects of Allegheny County government. He will also push for meaningful technological improvements to the county government that promotes the ideals of direct-democracy.

Inefficiencies in local government have been amplified by the 130 local municipalities and 43 school districts in Allegheny County. Raja believes that each unique municipality represents an important and unique part of our community, but he knows we can cut costs by sharing the burden for many of the services local governments provide. As County Executive, Raja will work with all the communities in Allegheny County to see where we can work together to more efficiently provide services for the citizens of Allegheny County and address issues that directly affect our quality of life. Finally, the Raja Plan calls for investigating innovative approaches to providing services through privatization or Public-Private Partnerships.

The Raja Plan for Modernizing Government

At the end of the first decade of the 21st century, Allegheny County must come to terms with new realities. Far too long the county has been living beyond its means. We have been mortgaging our children's future to pay the bills of today. Allegheny County has relied on unrealistic projections of revenue and every year seemingly makes the same mistakes. We allow abuses of benefits and overtime to drain the public coffers. County government wastes time and money by not embracing technological change. Our 130 local municipalities allow us to choose the type of community where we live, each with its own unique character and people. While these communities are important aspects of Allegheny County's identity, there is often significant overlap of services, which costs taxpayers more money and lowers service efficiency. Additionally, many aspects of local government could be more efficiently run by the private sector or through P3 Partnerships, but neither has yet to be seriously explored. Finally, locally owned infrastructure is in a state of dismal disrepair. Doing nothing threatens the long-term economic viability of the region and prevents the county from being able to serve the people of Allegheny County effectively.

Businesses need to manage their finances responsibly in order to survive. They need to continue to modernize the way they operate to remain competitive. County government should be no different. If elected, Raja will work to modernize Allegheny County. A modernized Allegheny County will spend less and be more efficient in addressing the needs of the people it serves.

Raja's plan to Modernize Government will work to accomplish this goal by focusing on these six areas:

1. Responsible Spending
2. Efficient Government
3. Technological Innovation
4. Public Public Partnerships
5. Privatization and Public Private Partnerships
6. Quality of Life

1. Responsible Spending

For years overoptimistic budgets have projected far more revenue than the county actually receives. We have been forced to borrow just to balance the budget, mortgaging our children's future to pay for the needs of today. The County Controller's office has been warning us that we are living beyond our means. Allegheny County will face a deficit if we continue down this road of reliance on one-time state and federal government revenues that are increasingly drying up.¹ In attempts to balance previous budgets the county has recklessly sold off county assets for one-

¹ Rujumba, Karamagi. "Allegheny County to Face Future Deficit, Controller Projects." *Post-Gazette.com*. Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, 15 Apr. 2009. Web. <<http://www.post-gazette.com/pg/09105/962951-100.stm>>.

time infusions of revenue. As County Executive, Raja will work to bring county expenses under control by calling on his strengths and experience as a CEO to properly balance the budget.

- **Honest Budgeting:** As County Executive, Raja will work to prevent overoptimistic projections of revenue. These projections have led to the county living well beyond its means. In order to balance the budget, the county has had to resort to one-time sources of revenue in the form of selling county assets, loans, and redirecting money from the capital budget. These solutions are only temporary. Over the past five years, these one-time revenue sources have totaled over \$185 million. Even more alarming is the county's outstanding debt has jumped 21% from \$601 million in 2006 to \$728 million in 2011.² As a business owner, Raja knows that these figures are not sustainable. We need to become more responsible for our future. Selling off county assets for one time infusions of cash and taking on more debt just to balance this year's budget will only hurt future generations. As County Executive, Raja will work tirelessly to trim the county budget by carefully cutting excess costs, improving efficiencies and will continue to investigate the possibility of privatizing unprofitable county functions such as the Kane Hospitals.
- **Keeping Personnel Expenses Under Control:** By carefully tracking expenditures on county employees, the budget's expansion can be restricted. For example, a report from the County Controller's office found that the county jail paid \$2.1 million over its budgeted amount for overtime. The report recommended improving the jail's operating structure by increasing the amount of normal and part time guards in order to lower the jail's reliance on overtime as well as transferring certain inmates to alternative housing in order to reduce costs.³ As County Executive, Raja will work with public officials and unions in order to not only address the county jail's issues but any problems of excesses in personnel expenses that are found across the county government.

2. Efficient Government

Government has become too bloated over the years. Taxpayer's money is being wasted through duplicate services and departments that are either no longer needed or that can be merged into another department. If elected county executive, Raja will continue the momentum of row office reform in order to make county government more efficient and effective by working with members of council and county government.

- **Benchmarking All Aspects of County Government:** All levels of government are expected to effectively spend the taxpayer's money. One of Raja's first acts as county

² Barcousky, Len. "County Controller Warns of Potential for Deficit Spending." *Post-Gazette.com*. Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, 27 Apr. 2011. Web. <<http://www.post-gazette.com/pg/11117/1142147-455-0.stm>>.

³ "Allegheny County Jail Guards' Overtime Hit \$2.1 Million in 2009." *TribLive*. Pittsburgh Tribune-Review, 27 Jan. 2011. Web. <http://www.pittsburghlive.com/x/pittsburghtrib/news/s_719905.html?_s_icmp=NetworkHeadlines#>.

executive would be to begin benchmarking the performance of every authority, department, and individual in county government. This process will be fully transparent and all results will be publically available online. Those authorities, departments, and individuals that perform above the benchmark will be maintained and enhanced to continually serve the people of Allegheny County. Those performing below benchmarked levels will undergo a comprehensive review to establish how they can be addressed or possibly eliminated.

- As county executive, Raja will implement productivity management tools across county government. These tools would be software and processes that are put in place that enable each employee of the county to track their own productivity. By ensuring that our county workforce is working as efficiently as possible, we ensure accountability and protect the taxpayer's hard earned money.
- Review Sunset Provisions: The most recent report by the Allegheny County Manager recommended for "continuance" rather than "abolishment" or "reorganization" of all 19 departments.⁴ Raja will work to create operational performance metrics so that taxpayers and Council members can examine and analyze the effectiveness of these departments. As the system currently stands it is difficult to determine if the justification for each of these departments are in fact warranted. Without change the status quo will continue.
- Cross-Training: Raja will investigate the possibilities of "cross-training" front-line county employees. "Cross-training" means training those employees in all public service aspects of Allegheny County government as well as giving them decision making ability normally reserved for supervisors. Such training has been described as viewing government as a team effort that keeps employees engaged, active and interested.⁵ Additionally the public will be better served by more employees that will be able to help you with an issue quickly and efficiently.

3. Technological Innovation

The digital age has revolutionized the way that we live our lives. As technology advances faster each day, governments are struggling to keep up. In the middle of difficult economic times, investing in technological innovation is more important than ever. One of the best ways for Allegheny County to save money in the long term is to invest in technology now. Technology gives us the unique opportunity to cut costs, increase efficiency, and directly connect the people of Allegheny County to their government.

⁴ Sunset Review Report. Rep. Allegheny County Manager, 30 Dec. 2010. Web. <http://www.alleghenycounty.us/manager/sunset_2010.pdf>.

⁵ Kerrigan, Heather. "A Cross-Training Rundown." *Governing: State Government News on Politics, Management & Finance*. 15 June 2011. Web. <<http://www.governing.com/topics/mgmt/cross-training-rundown.html>>.

- Improve Government Technology: As County Executive Raja will work to modernize the county IT system in order to cut costs in the day to day operations of county government. Savings will come from reducing paper, improving information sharing and making county government more accessible to its citizens.
- Self Service Portals: As County Executive Raja will work to ensure that all county information and services are available to the public through Self Service Portals. Raja wants to make citizen's interaction with county government as easy and efficient as possible. These portals will allow people to do everything online from tracking taxes, renting pavilions at county park facilities, to applying for a job. By putting this information online, we will make government more accessible to the people and make county workers more efficient.
- Connect to Residents: One of the wonders of the digital age is the ability for ordinary citizens to have their voices heard. E-Democracy has the potential to forever change the way people interact with their representatives. Some municipalities are at the forefront of this movement. Over a year ago the City of Pittsburgh launched the iBurgh app for the iPhone and Android phones. The app allows city residents to report potholes, graffiti, and other nuisances to city government using their smart phone. The app was developed by a Squirrel Hill based Carnegie Mellon spin-off called Yinz-Cam.⁶ This app is just one example of how innovative thinking can bring innovation to local government. As County Executive Raja will work with institutions like CMU and the University of Pittsburgh to develop a similar system for the county either by expanding the current iBurgh app or by developing a new and more robust system for the entire county.

4. Public-Public Partnerships

Allegheny County is a large and diverse county with a population of 1,223,248 people. Almost as diverse as our people are our municipalities. With 130 different municipalities, local government has always been very close to our residents. These municipalities are what make Allegheny County unique and a great place to live. However, so many municipalities sometimes breed inefficiencies in service delivery. Over the years there have been slow moves to consolidate duplicative services across the county such as the merging of the 911 call centers. Raja believes that for Allegheny County to be successful in the 21st century our municipalities must learn to work together to solve a common problem that affects us all. Working together does not mean a full city-county merger. Working together means that we all understand that what happens in one community can affect all of us and taking steps to make all of our

⁶ McNulty, Timothy. "iBurgh App Takes Its Place at Last on iPhones." *Post-Gazette.com*. 2 Jan. 2010. Web. <<http://www.post-gazette.com/pg/10002/1025302-53.stm>>.

governments more effective in serving our citizens. To achieve this goal, Raja proposes that we work with communities to encourage new cooperative agreements and explore opportunities for the consolidation of county and local services where appropriate all while preserving the unique and diverse communities that make Allegheny County the place that it is.

- Neighbors Working with Neighbors: As County Executive Raja will work to bring all 130 municipalities to the table to work together to solve common problems that affect all of Allegheny County. Raja will assign a staff member to work with existing Councils of Governments to assist them in continuing to work towards greater intergovernmental cooperation. That staff member will also work with groups such as the Congress of Neighboring Communities (CONNECT). Based out of the University of Pittsburgh, CONNECT is a forum for local government within Allegheny County whose mission is to coordinate the collective activities of the City of Pittsburgh and the 35 municipalities that share a common border with the city. As commissioner in Mt. Lebanon, Raja worked closely with CONNECT on issues that face all of Allegheny County by spearheading economic development activities across the organization. For example CONNECT is working to assist their partner communities with water issues surrounding ALCOSAN and required improvements to the county's sewer system.⁷
- Combine Services as Appropriate – Across the commonwealth, municipal service sharing happens in all operations of government, from fire and police, to service sharing and collective purchasing.⁸ There is significant overlap of capital intensive services between the City of Pittsburgh and Allegheny County that puts unnecessary strain on taxpayers. As County Executive Raja will work with the City of Pittsburgh and other municipalities within Allegheny County where appropriate to continue to explore ways to streamline operations. Areas of focus would be economic development, facilities, information technology, public safety, public works, purchasing and tax collection. Combining services on a voluntary basis and working together could help the county and local municipalities save on the cost of repairs to our regions crumbling infrastructure. Such consolidation will only be undertaken if it is found to save money for the taxpayer while not adversely impacting the quality of the service.

⁷ Levine, Marty. "Water, Water Connections Everywhere, an Issue CONNECT's 3 River Wet Weather Grant Should Help." *Pop City*. 15 Dec. 2010. Web. <<http://www.popcitymedia.com/forgood/connect3rww121510.aspx>>.

⁸ *Municipal Merger/Consolidation and Sharing of Services*. Rep. Team Pennsylvania Foundation and 10,000 Friends of Pennsylvania, 2009. Web. <<http://teampa.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/07/Final-Report-TeamPA-Merger-Consoldation.pdf>>.

5. Privatization and Public Private Partnerships

The Raja Plan calls for the county to investigate the opportunities presented by privatization or public private partnerships (P3s). A P3 is an agreement between a public agency and a private sector entity where the skill and assets of each sector are shared in delivering a service or facility management for the use of the general public.⁹ Raja will take a comprehensive look at county government to find departments that consistently lose money such as Kane Hospitals. Raja understands that the Kane Hospitals provide essential services to some of the most vulnerable in Allegheny County. Raja will only direct the county to pursue possible privatization or P3 partnerships if it is found that doing so will increase operating efficiency while still providing high quality and essential services to those in need.

6. Quality of Life

Raja believes that an integral part of modernizing the government of Allegheny County is to ensure that its residents have the best possible quality of life. As County Executive, Raja will continue to explore new and innovative ways to deal with the issues of county owned infrastructure, clean air and water, parks and trails, and the environmental remediation and development of brownfield sites in order to improve the quality of life for all county residents. In a time of increased financial stress across the state and country, there is no single and simple solution. Raja will investigate all options available such as P3 partnerships, working regionally to find a common solution to a common problem, and or transferring certain assets to the state.

- Infrastructure: The road and bridge system statewide is falling apart. As of March of this year there were almost 5,310 structurally deficient bridges in the state.¹⁰ The costs to maintain this infrastructure, especially bridges, is high. This year the state will spend \$216 million to improve 42 structurally deficient bridges in Allegheny County.¹¹ Furthermore, a significant amount of financial burden for maintaining roads and bridges falls on Allegheny County. The county is responsible for maintaining 800 miles of roadway, which is more than all other counties in the state combined. The county is also responsible for 174 bridges and the Port Authority is responsible for 33 bridges over 20

⁹ *Fundamentals of Public Private Partnerships*. The National Council for Public Private Partnerships. Web. <<http://www.ncppp.org/howpart/PPPfundamentals.html>>.

¹⁰ Schmitz, Jon. "Strapped PennDOT Fixing Bridges First." *Post-Gazette.com*. Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, 10 June 2011. Web. <<http://www.post-gazette.com/pg/11161/1152672-454-0.stm>>.

¹¹ Power, Jordan, and Robyn Rudish-Laning. "One in 4 County Bridges Deficient." *The Duquesne Duke*. Duquesne University, 11 Apr. 2011. Web. <<http://www.theduquesneduke.com/one-in-4-county-bridges-deficient-1.2146515>>.

feet or more in length.¹² As County Executive Raja will work with state and local leaders in order to find a way to address these problems.

- Clean Air: The region has come a long way from the smoky days of the steel industry. While a lot of progress has been made, our air quality is still not where it needs to be. Allegheny County has a high amount of PM 2.5 particulates, more commonly known as soot, in the atmosphere. These particles can get deep within the respiratory track causing many short and long term problems that can worsen medical conditions such as asthma and heart disease.¹³ If elected county executive, Raja will work with local private industry, the EPA and the Allegheny County Health Department to attempt to find a way to lower the pollutants in the atmosphere. Raja also believes that university talent may be useful in developing new and innovative ways to reduce pollution.
- Clean Water: A generation ago swimming in any of the three rivers was absolutely out of the question. Now the rivers have become a recreational destination with riverfront parks and people on the water fishing and boating. The rivers are undoubtedly cleaner than they were, but there are still some major problems with clean water in the county. The county's sewer systems are antiquated and out of date. On days where we receive as little as one tenth of an inch of rain or snow melt, the sewer system will overflow into the river. River advisories still affect nearly 50% of the recreational season, harming our quality of life. Of even more concern is that the rivers provide the county with almost 90% of our drinking water.¹⁴ Clean, fresh water is undoubtedly one of our region's most precious resources and must be protected. The county is under a federal consent decree that requires all municipalities under the Allegheny County Sanitary Authority (ALCOSAN) district to be in compliance by 2026. As County Executive Raja will work with communities, ALCOSAN, the Allegheny County Health Department and nonprofit groups like Three Rivers Wet Weather to find ways to work together and fix the problem all while keeping costs down for the residents of Allegheny County.
- Parks and Trails: Parks and trails are an important aspect of the quality of life in any community. As county executive, Raja will work to further build the Allegheny County Parks Foundation. The foundation was founded in 2007 to bring together public and private stakeholders to improve county parks. This organization, much like the

¹² *Allegheny County Road and Bridge Ownership Evaluation Report*. Rep. Allegheny County Places, Mar. 2008. Web. <<http://www.alleghenyplaces.com/docs/SupportingDocuments/Transportation/AC%20Road&Bridge%20Owner.pdf>>.

¹³ "Fine Particles (PM 2.5) Questions and Answers." *New York State Department of Health*. Web. <http://www.health.state.ny.us/environmental/indoors/air/pmq_a.htm>.

¹⁴ "Overview of the Problem." *3 Rivers Wet Weather*. Web. <http://www.3riverswetweather.org/d_weather/d_overview.stm>.

Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy, has great potential to revitalize county parks. Raja will also study the possibilities of eventually merging county and city parks under one organization, while encouraging the foundation and the Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy to work more closely together. Doing so will make both organizations more efficient while allowing the Allegheny County Parks Foundation to benefit from the years of experience of the Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy.

- Brownfield Sites: Raja will work with communities and local leaders in order to foster the development of brownfield sites across the county. He will work with the Allegheny County Economic Development Department and partners in the private sector to find opportunities for P3 partnerships in order to promote faster development that will bring jobs to the county. Raja's first goal will be the development of two large brownfield sites along the Monongahela River. The Carrie Furnace in Rankin offers the possibility incorporating commercial and research park development near Pitt and CMU. The site sits near the end of the East Busway and extending the line to the site could spur development. Additionally its proximity to the Waterfront development across the river could help spur development. The entire site is planned to be centered by a preserved Carrie Furnace as part of the Rivers of Steel National Heritage Area. This site offers exciting opportunities for the future of Allegheny County while allowing us to pay homage to our collective history. The second site is the Hazelwood LTV site, just down river from the Second Avenue technology park. This site offers the potential to become another incubator zone due to its location on Second Avenue and proximity to research institutions in Oakland. Both sites offer the potential for significant economic development that will create meaningful jobs right here in Allegheny County.