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## Report: NYS Sales Tax Revenue 'Weak;' LI Posts Gains

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Local sales tax collections — an indicator of Main Street's economic health — for the first half of the year was considered weak statewide, although Long Island showed gains, according to a state comptroller's office report released Thursday.

Nassau County's local sales tax collections were 1.3 percent higher than the same period in 2015, and Suffolk County's revenue rose 0.4 percent over the same period the year before, according to the report by Comptroller Thomas DiNapoli.

Statewide, local sales tax collections increased by \$130 million or 1.7 percent in the first half of the year compared to the same period in 2015. Sales tax revenue increased in 34 of 57 counties outside New York City. DiNapoli noted that over the last three years, sales tax revenue in the second half of each year has accelerated and projections show the next six months could continue that pattern.

"However, should sales tax collections not rebound as forecast, annual growth would be lower than in any year since the recession," the report stated.

New York City's sales tax growth of 2.4 percent overcame losses in several upstate counties. The biggest decline — 1.3 percent — was in Western New York.

The report came out a day after Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo's economic development chief, Howard Zemsky, was grilled by a state Assembly committee dissatisfied with the results of Cuomo's tax-break programs to lure businesses and his rosy outlook of the Western New York economy.

"The state of the economy is strong, and it's because of our pro-business initiatives," Zemsky told the Assembly Economic Development Committee in the hearing. He said the improvement is "proof positive our efforts have paid off."

On Thursday, the independent watchdog Citizens Budget Commission issued a statement on Cuomo's job-producing programs that provide tax breaks and aid to employers to retain and create jobs: "The fundamental question of whether business activity has been induced by the governmental assistance provided by any and all of these programs remains unanswered."