



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Craig M. Johnson

Senator Johnson, Assemblyman Alessi Push for Breast Cancer Program Restorations

CRAIG M. JOHNSON March 8, 2009

Senator Craig Johnson (D-Nassau) and Assemblyman Marc Alessi (D-Wading River) last week called for funding to be restored for two vitally important breast cancer research and outreach programs.

The state legislators said the programs – The Cornell Breast Cancer and Environmental Risk Factors Program and the Adelphi NY Statewide Breast Cancer Hotline and Support Program -- offer services that are indispensable in the battle against a disease that disproportionately affects Long Islanders.

"As someone who has lost both their mother and grandmother to breast cancer, I am very sensitive to the incredibly important services performed by these programs," Senator Johnson said. "To have them eliminated would be a disservice not only those who have been diagnosed with breast cancer, but also to their families and loved ones."

"While I understand that this is one of the most difficult fiscal challenges the state has ever faced, we cannot afford to sacrifice the health and well-being of New Yorkers," Alessi said.

"Nearly 14,000 New Yorkers will be diagnosed with breast cancer this year alone. We can't put them on hold because money is tight."

The Cornell Breast Cancer and Environmental Risk Factors Program, one of two programs on the chopping block, has made headlines for its groundbreaking research and awareness initiatives on breast cancer clustering, suggesting a link between the high incidence of cancer in certain areas and environmental aggravators such as pesticides.

The program is currently funded with \$450,000 in pesticide revenue set aside by the Environmental Protection Fund – money that would evaporate under the proposed executive budget.

Gov. Paterson's budget would also eliminate the Adelphi NY Statewide Breast Cancer Hotline and Support Program, an initiative that has provided professional counseling, education and outreach services to thousands of breast cancer patients and their families throughout its 29-year history. The program offers assistance on a wide array of topics, including referrals for low-cost mammograms, insurance questions and wig suppliers.

The program usually receives \$300,000 a year in state funding, which was eliminated in the proposed executive budget plan.

Senator Johnson and Assemblyman Alessi said it was inexcusable that the executive spending plan cut funding for these programs, while events such as the celebration of the 400th anniversary of the discovery of the Hudson River received a \$4 million allocation.

"Potentially life-saving programs should always get priority over pomp and circumstance," Senator Johnson said. "That is doubly true in this harsh economic climate. Substantial changes need to be made to ensure that this budget has the right priorities."

Senator Johnson and Assemblyman Alessi were joined in their call for the programs' funding restoration by Assemblywoman Michelle Schimel (D-Great Neck), Assemblyman Robert Sweeney (D-Lindenhurst), and Assemblywoman Pat Eddington (D-Medford,) as well as

advocates and volunteers from the programs.