



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Suzi Oppenheimer

Senate Passes Legislation to Protect Summer Day Campers

SUZI OPPENHEIMER July 29, 2009

| COMMITTEE: **EDUCATION**

Senator Oppenheimer Urges Governor to Sign Bill into Law

A bill that would ensure the safety of thousands of Westchester campers, S.4944-A, sponsored by Senator Suzi Oppenheimer (D-Mamaroneck), passed the Senate on July 16, 2009.

The legislation would enable county health departments to inspect many more day camps throughout the state than was previously possible. Under existing law, only camps that conduct more than half of their activities outdoors were required to be inspected, creating the potential for dangerous environments in primarily indoor camps. This bill would amend the definition of summer day camps to include those with indoor organized group activities where there is a significant risk of injury.

“I am pleased to have sponsored this legislation, which will protect the thousands of campers statewide who attend summer day camps that are primarily indoors,” said Senator Oppenheimer. “By defining summer day camps by the risk of their activities rather than by whether they take place indoors or out, the bill affords parents the peace of mind in knowing that the camps they choose for their children will meet county health and safety standards.”

The bill was strongly supported by the New York State Association of County Health Officials (NYSACHO), the Camp Directors Association and the Westchester Department of Health. A 2003 survey by NYSACHO found that, of the 30 counties reporting, more than 38,000 children attended 136 camps that were exempt from health and safety regulation because more than 50 percent of their activities were conducted indoors. The legislation also increases the camp permit fee, from \$100 to \$200, which will help defray the costs of the inspection and permitting process.

“Day camps should be fun and enjoyable places for our children to spend their summer days. By closing a loophole in the existing law, my bill will ensure that they are also safe,” said Senator Oppenheimer. A companion bill, A.6722 (Paulin) passed the Assembly on June 15. “I urge the Governor to sign this legislation into law so that all summer campers can be protected.”