



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Joseph A. Griffo

## Griffo Urges Parks Officials: ‘Get Creative’ to Avert Closings

JOSEPH A. GRIFFO April 16, 2010

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(Albany) - State Senator Joseph A Griffo (R-IP-C, Rome) today called on parks officials to “get creative” in identifying ways to prevent closing parks and campgrounds just weeks before the start of the busy tourist and travel seasons.

With the state budget nearly two weeks late, parks officials were again warning that they will close or severely cut back operations at 77 facilities across the state, including a large number in Central and Northern New York, even as they acknowledged the closings would have a serious impact on local economies.

“Closing parks and denying New Yorkers outdoor recreational opportunities—moves that even state officials admit will do more harm to already struggling local economies—is the wrong solution to fixing Albany’s budget problems,” Griffo said.

Griffo grilled state Parks Commissioner Carol Ash at a Senate hearing last week over the proposed cuts, and asked about alternatives, like leasing or selling some of the nearly two dozen state-owned golf courses to private operators as a way to plug the agency's budget holes, an option that Ash conceded had not been considered.

Nearly two decades ago, facing a similar budget crunch, the state made such a deal involving a golf course in Marcy, allowing for continued operations and returning a profit to taxpayers.

Griffo also suggested looking at ways to consolidate operations at state campgrounds, now run by two different agencies, and relying more on volunteer groups to help with parks operations.

"I challenged state Parks officials to think creatively and find better ways that won't cut access to parks and historic treasures that have been developed over generations for the enjoyment, education and recreation of New York families," he said.

"Closing parks, raising fees and limiting access makes families shoulder a larger burden for Albany's mistakes, and hurts local businesses that rely on tourism and visits to these state-owned attractions."

Visitors to state Parks spend an estimated \$1.9 billion at local businesses outside the parks, an amount that Commissioner Ash said would be impacted by the proposed closures.

Videos of this meeting are posted on YouTube [here](#) and [here](#) as well as on this website [here](#) and [here](#).