



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Mark Grisanti

## Newest state senator fields questions, outlines Albany plans during Listening Tour

MARK GRISANTI February 19, 2011

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Niagara Falls residents spoke out on a host of issues — from taxes and education to budget cuts and Medicaid — and state Sen. Mark Grisanti was listening.

It was the third stop of the newly elected senator's Listening Tour. He met with constituents across Niagara and Erie counties to hear what they'd like to see done in their communities.

Grisanti, who met with around 50 residents on Thursday at the American Legion Post No. 1142 on Buffalo Avenue, said he was hoping to discuss their concerns, issues and do his best to address or advocate for them in Albany.

“Everything that comes my way (in Albany,) my first question is how does this affect the Western New York area, the city of Buffalo, the city of Niagara Falls?” Grisanti said. “My voice is loud up there in Albany.”

Grisanti, who fielded questions from a number of residents, expressed his support for a regional council to spur economic development, the need for more power created at the Niagara Power Project to stay in Western New York and promoting small businesses among other issues.

Len Butski of Niagara Falls expressed concern over the loss of businesses and industries and the migration of young people from the city. He used figures such as the 11 percent unemployment rate and the poverty levels of the city.

Grisanti in response discussed projects like the culinary institute, which he said, is a key piece to turning the tide in the downtown area. He talked about One Niagara and its potential under new ownership.

Grisanti did take a few shots at the pace of progress in Albany. With this being his first time in public office, Grisanti said he is “amazed” at how slow things move.

“They walk slow, I mean they really do. Even the elevators are slow,” the state senator said.

Some of the things Grisanti said he is working on include term limits for elected officials including two, four-year terms, which he said eliminate politicians being able to receive a public pension and affording them an opportunity to cave in to special interests.

He touted a property tax cap, which was recently passed by the Senate but not the Assembly, which received a rebuttal from a local business leader.

Ron Anderluh, revitalization coordinator for the Niagara Street Business Association, said while a tax cap is a start, it's tax relief that the city needs.

"Small businesses need tax relief," Anderluh said.

With Gov. Andrew Cuomo's proposed budget calling for massive cuts to education including \$5.6 million to the Niagara Falls School District, some residents asked Grisanti what his position was on the cuts.

He said he believes some funding will be restored to districts like Niagara Falls that are considered "high need," but that some painful cuts had to be made, specifically to administrative salaries.

"We are working to decrease some of the cuts," Grisanti said,

Before leaving, Grisanti gave those in attendance his personal cell phone number and told them to call him anytime.

"It's a good thing I got the unlimited plan," he joked.

Niagara Falls City Council Chairman Sam Fruscione was the only local elected official in attendance.