



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Joseph P. Addabbo Jr.

Addabbo Bill to Prevent Unwarranted Harassment by Government Agencies Clears Senate

JOSEPH P. ADDABBO JR February 6, 2012

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Queens, NY, February 6, 2012 -- NYS Senator Joseph P. Addabbo, Jr. (D-Queens) today announced that his legislation (S.1242) to protect New York residents from unfounded harassment by government agencies has been approved by the full New York State Senate.

“Sometimes, disagreements among community residents can rise to a level where one person falsely accuses another of wrongdoing and reports the alleged misdeeds to a government agency, simply to cause their neighbor grief,” said Addabbo, noting that constituent complaints about such behavior led to the introduction of the bill. “This kind of harassment not only seriously hurts the person who is wrongfully accused, but leads to a waste of government resources and precious time that various agency inspectors could devote to actual violations of law.”

Under existing law, a person can be found guilty of aggravated harassment in the second degree when they harass, annoy, threaten or otherwise alarm another individual through the use of verbal abuse, insults, intimidation, humiliation or physical assault. Under Addabbo’s legislation, the law would be expanded to cover instances where a person uses a government agency to harass someone else, including the unlawful disclosure of confidential information. Government agency personnel who act on their own to harass residents would also be reined in under this legislation.

“If a person knows for a fact that another person is violating the law, there’s no reason why that illegal behavior shouldn’t be reported to the proper authorities and dealt with in the right way,” said Addabbo. “But pinning false illegal behavior on another person just to cause that individual frustration, anger, and time wasted in fighting baseless charges is simply intolerable, and my bill, hopefully, will make people think twice before they point false fingers at others.”

In addition to wasted government time and resources, the Senator noted that unwarranted harassment can lead to reduced employee productivity and morale, higher turnover and absenteeism rates, and increases in medical and workers’ compensation claims. “In this economy, it’s important to realize that harassment isn’t just painful to the person being targeted, but carries with it a significant price,” he said. “I am pleased that the Senate approved this important bill, and hope that the State Assembly will follow suit.”

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