



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Mark Grisanti

Senator Grisanti introduces “Sewage Pollution Right To Know Act”

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Senator Mark Grisanti recently announced sponsorship of the “Sewage Pollution Right To Know Act” to amend the environmental conservation law to establish a procedure for the operator of any sewage treatment plant to notify the public of all raw sewage overflows within 24 hours.

The bill spells out all the information that must be reported to the New York State Department of Health and the Department of Environmental Conservation including when, where and how much has been spilled.

The purpose of this legislation is to provide valuable information to the public about spills in a timely manner and in an effective way.

“I am pleased to introduce this legislation to establish a mechanism to alert the public of any and all sewage spills that could threaten the water that people use for both recreational and commercial activities. Prompt notification of all violations to affected waterway users will initiate proactive and preventative measures to limit the risks of people mixing with potential life threatening bacteria, toxins, pathogens and chemicals,” said Senator Grisanti.

“One of the best parts about life in Western New York is our close access to the water and our

ability to readily enjoy it in the warm weather. We must take steps to improve our local water quality.”

The Environmental Protection Agency also issued an order to the Buffalo Sewer Authority demanding compliance with the federal Clean Water Act. In its order, the EPA states that the Buffalo Sewer Authority has not submitted a mandated plan on how the city would reduce the amount of sewage and other pollutants that flow out of 52 combined sewer points into the Niagara River and Tributaries.

It is estimated that Buffalo’s combined system contributes almost four billion gallons of combined sewage overflow to the Niagara River and its tributaries each year.

“Sewage Pollution in the Niagara River is degrading water quality and having a direct effect on the quality of people’s lives,” said Judith A. Enck, EPA Regional Administrator. “Local fish are inedible and people can’t enjoy recreational water sports or local parks because of sewage odors. Buffalo has made improvements to its combined system in recent years, but much more must be done to protect people’s health and water quality.”

The Authority is required to submit a long-term control plan to the EPA and DEC by April 30, 2012.

The plan must include proposals for sewer systems improvements to ensure that combined sewer overflows meet new technology and water quality-based requirements.