



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Joseph P. Addabbo Jr.

Addabbo: “We Need to Change the Process of Allocating Member Items, WHEN Governor Wields Veto Pen”

JOSEPH P. ADDABBO JR April 23, 2012

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Proposes Direct Application to State Agencies by Local Groups for New Money

Queens, NY, April 23, 2012 – NYS Senator Joseph P. Addabbo, Jr. (D-Howard Beach), reacted strongly to the governor’s recent use of his veto power to eliminate funding for local community groups and programs.

Cuomo vetoed 126 items in total, costing \$640,000. Thirteen items were sponsored by the Assembly Democratic Majority, worth a little more than \$50,000. He vetoed 12 items sponsored by the Senate Republican Majority, and 99 sponsored by the Minority Senate Democrats, worth about \$412,000. Governor Cuomo had accused state legislators of sneaking new member item allocations or “pork” into the new state budget — and used his scalpel to cut it out. But lawmakers said none of the projects were new and that the money was for old projects that never got all their previously promised cash and that the local funding allocations were a fraction of the total \$132.6 billion state budget.

Noted Senator Addabbo, “The governor’s vetoed member items range from \$10,000 for the Police Athletic League (PAL) citywide to benefit local youth programs to more general grants aiding school districts with academic programs, libraries, not-for-profits and educational institutions. This was the funding that was supposed to help local people and community groups, but the governor didn’t want to allocate it. I believe that was wrong.”

Some of the other painful cuts to worthwhile projects in the Senator’s district were community groups helping youth, seniors or veterans programs: \$5,000 to the Greater Woodhaven Development Corp. (Economic Development/Aid to Localities); \$3,000 to the Forest Hills Volunteer Ambulance Corps (State/Aid to Localities); \$2,000 for the American Italian Cancer Foundation (State/Aid to Localities); \$1,000 for Elmhurst’s New Life Food Pantry (State/Aid to Localities); \$3,000 for the Ridgewood Local Development Corp. (Parks/Aid to Localities); \$2,000 for Maspeth Town Hall (Parks/Aid to Localities); \$3,000 for Howard Beach’s Columbus Day Foundation (State/Aid to Localities); \$1,000

for Ozone Park's Zion Tabernacle Food Pantry (State/Aid to Localities); \$3,500 for Ozone Park's South Queens Boys and Girls Club (Criminal Justice Services/Aid to Localities); \$3,500 for Middle Village's Juniper Park Civic Association (Parks/Aid to Localities); \$3,000 for the Greater Ridgewood Youth Council (Parks/Aid to Localities); \$2,400 for the Ridgewood Seniors Community Corporation (State/Aid to Localities); and \$2,000 for the Vietnam Veterans Chapter #32 (Division of Veterans' Affairs/Aid to Localities).

Paul Kerzner of the Ridgewood Property Owners said, "While we appreciate the Governors attempt to cut the fat and streamline government, we are not pork. We provide vital services to the community's working class home owners."

Bob Holden, President of the Juniper Civic Association said, "The president, governor, mayor and most elected officials encourage volunteerism. We have dozens of groups in the 15th Senate District willing and able to organize volunteers to work on hundreds of projects and programs. A small amount of money is needed to keep these groups afloat. It is vital that funds to support not-for-profit groups be released immediately."

Bob Monahan of the Greater Ridgewood Youth Council stated, "With major cuts to the City Budgets over the past few years, small not-for-profits are desperate for State monies to survive. The Greater Ridgewood Youth Council has been waiting three years for State Capital dollars to build its state-of-the art Community Center in Ridgewood without success. It is our hope that the Governor will work with the Senate and Assembly to move old, allocated monies, along and allow agencies like the GRYC to complete projects that will benefit a whole lot of families."

Eileen Reilly from the Maspeth Town Hall explained, "The Maspeth Town Hall would have used these much needed dollars towards our Tutorial Program, Regents Review classes and After School program for children in the area who need our services. We would also use these dollars to help pay for our Senior Programs which include Tai Chi Instruction, Chair Yoga Classes and Fine Art Instruction. Maspeth Town Hall would be very grateful if the Governor would let these dollars be used by our center to offer the programs that enhance the lives of the families of our community."

Alan Wolfe issued a statement for the Forest Hills Volunteer Ambulance Corps: "We depend on support from the public, the same public which we volunteer to serve. We are in dire need for funds to accomplish our mission and are seeking ways to fund necessary life-saving equipment."

Added Addabbo, "A new process is needed to get monies to our local groups after the governor uses line-item vetoes for funding of legislators' projects back home." Addabbo proposes a structure where groups can apply directly to the various state agencies for money, which would cut the elected official out of the process altogether. For example, veterans could apply to the Division of Veterans' Affairs; seniors to the Department for the Aging; and community or youth groups to the Department of Economic Development, Department of Parks, State, or Criminal Justice Services. Addabbo was optimistic that a process can set up with very little effort from Governor Cuomo's office.

The Senator believes that the state already has a credible vetting process that can determine if an applying group is credible and would use the funding in a proper manner. Addabbo said a process can be established where applications can be submitted directly to state agencies where the funding has already been allocated to their individual budgets. He also believes that by eliminating the elected officials from the process, any concern or issue of misuse, scandal or impropriety would be addressed. “It’s not about the photo op or press release to be issued by the elected official, it’s about getting funding to local residents, schools and community groups who provide services, but are now being ignored by our state budget,” Addabbo stated.

Addabbo plans to forward a letter to Governor Cuomo and follow up with his office in an effort to implement the Senator’s proposal and ultimately get local funding from the state budget to the communities.

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