



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Joseph A. Griffo

Griffo Says Scandal Points to Need to Limit Legislative Leadership Tenure

JOSEPH A. GRIFFO September 25, 2012

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State Senator Joseph A. Griffo (R-C-IP, Rome) today stated his support for called for the decision of the Joint Commission on Public Ethics (JCOPE) to conduct the fullest possible inquiry into the ongoing Vito Lopez sexual harassment scandal and pressed for adoption of a bill he has authored to limit the tenure of legislative leaders.

“The people require a thorough investigation of the Assembly’s handling of the matter involving Vito Lopez, and I am very supportive of the decision by the Joint Commission on Public Ethics to conduct a full inquiry,” Griffo said. “We need the full story about who did what and who knew what – and we also need to ensure that the good work we have done in Albany these past two years is not undone because of this incident.”

Griffo said the incident highlights the need for further changes to reform the culture of doing business in Albany. “The responsibility of JCOPE is to look at the situation and look at the actions of individuals. I believe that as state legislators, we all have a wider responsibility to assess the extent to which the culture of Albany and the way state government has functioned have created a climate that we want to change.”

Griffo highlighted his Senate bill 4877, would limit the tenure of legislative leaders, as the kind of systemic-level action needed in Albany. He noted that his bill has an Assembly companion version, A.02415 (Galef).

“One of the very first pieces of legislation I sponsored when I came to Albany in 2007 – and one that did pass that term -- was a bill that would impose term limits on the most powerful offices in Albany, because I felt then and still believe that a structure that does not allow change cannot provide the climate of openness and transparency that I believe are vital elements in the functioning of government,” Griffo said. He noted that the State Senate has adopted term limits for leadership positions as a rule governing Senate operations, but said he still wants the limits formalized into law and also enacted by the Assembly to cover both houses.

“The Senate rule that I helped create sets a limit for four terms, or eight years. In the legislation I have sponsored, we have set a limit of six terms, that’s 12 years. That’s a long time to hold such a major office, and I think what we have seen is that when the same people are in power for a long time, the process does not function in the same open way it should when there is change.”

“I appreciate and respect the individuals who serve as leaders,” Griffo said. “However, I deeply believe that the system is broken beyond the ability of individuals to make it work. Imposing term limits on leadership positions jump-starts change to build a better system, and in the end state government must be built with a structure that gets the job done, not one that allows for the development of powerful individuals.”