



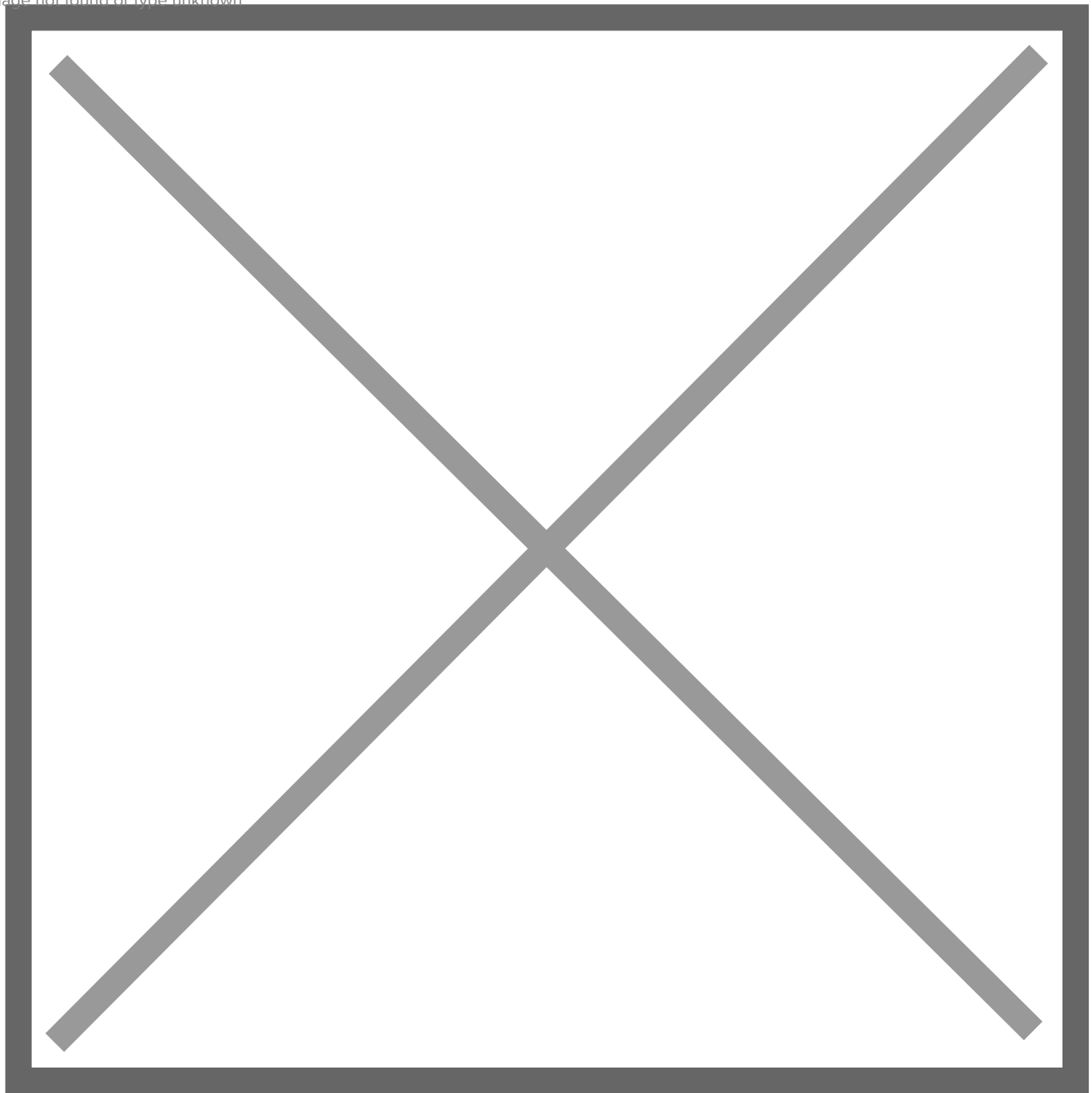
NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Timothy M. Kennedy

Senator Kennedy Announces Progress in Securing Resources for Operation SNUG, CASA Program

TIMOTHY M. KENNEDY March 11, 2013

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Critical funds for programming to help at-risk youth will be made a priority in Senate budget resolution.

Kennedy says Senate's proposal includes funding for Operation SNUG, which combats gang violence, and the Court Appointed Special Advocates program, which assists youth in the Family Court System.

Kennedy: Now we must ensure resources for at-risk youth remain in the final negotiated budget.

ALBANY, N.Y. – Senator Tim Kennedy, D-Buffalo, announced new progress in the ongoing efforts to secure resources for two critical programs that help at-risk youth – Operation SNUG and the Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) program. Kennedy said the State Senate will include funding for these critical programs in their one-house budget resolution. It's an important step forward, but advocacy efforts must continue to ensure the funds remain in the final negotiated budget.

“New York State needs to step up its efforts to support at-risk youth. By prioritizing Operation SNUG and the CASA program in the Senate budget resolution, we are poised to make a real difference in the lives of local young people,” Kennedy said. “This is a step in the right direction, but we can't let up now. The fight is not yet over. The State Senate is supporting these vital programs, and now we must ensure that this critical funding remains a part of the final budget plan as negotiations continue.”

Inclusion in the Senate budget resolution is just one step in a long process. It means the Senate believes it to be a priority to fund Operation SNUG and the CASA program. However, the funds must still be negotiated into the final budget. Senator Kennedy asks the community to keep up the pressure to ensure funding for these programs remains a part of the final negotiated budget, which is expected to be approved in the coming weeks.

While each program takes a different focus, they share a collective goal of helping young people succeed and keeping our community safe and strong. **Operation SNUG – which is guns spelled backwards – aims to reverse local trends in violent crime and gang activity**. When SNUG received adequate funding previously, it helped curb gang activity in Buffalo and communities across the state. Officials from the Community Action Organization of Erie County say Operation SNUG led to a marked decline in street violence in the 14215 and 14211 zip-code areas in Buffalo.

“With homicides up by nearly 40 percent in the City of Buffalo, action is urgently needed to stop the violence,” Kennedy said. “By re-launching Operation SNUG, we will help cut down on gang activity and make Buffalo and cities across the state safer.”

CASA provides volunteer advocates for abused and neglected children in foster care and the family court system. Essentially, the program ensures young people gain access to the support and services they need to avoid destructive decisions.

“As the father of three young children, my heart aches for abused and neglected children who have to go through foster care and the family court system,” Kennedy said. “Children need the helping hand and supportive voice that the CASA program provides.”

Both programs carry very minimal price tags compared to the tremendous impact they make in the lives of individual young people and the community as a whole. In their one-house budget resolution, the Senate recommends a \$2 million allocation for Operation SNUG and a \$1.5 million allocation for CASA.

Kennedy also applauded the restoration of cuts to vital services for people with developmental disabilities. In recent weeks, local advocates fought back against the cuts. The Senate included a full restoration of funds for those services in their budget resolution.

In recent weeks, Kennedy has fought for the reinstatement of funding for Operation SNUG, CASA and developmental disabilities services.

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Senator Timothy M. Kennedy represents the New York State Senate’s 63rd District, which is comprised of the towns of Cheektowaga, the city of Lackawanna and nearly all of the city of Buffalo. More information is available at <http://kennedy.nysenate.gov>.