



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

James L. Seward

Seward, Mohawk Valley Senate Delegation Advance Flood Recovery Strategy

JAMES L. SEWARD July 12, 2013



HERKIMER, 07/12/13 – Mohawk Valley state senators Senator James L. Seward (R/C/I–Oneonta), Senator Joseph A. Griffo (R/C/I–Rome), Senator Hugh T. Farley (R/C/I–Schenectady) and Senator David J. Valesky (D–Oneida) today announced a multi-prong strategy to assist local businesses and residents recover and rebuild from devastating June/July flooding.

The senators are reiterating their request for a federal emergency declaration that would make available Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) assistance to aid local governments, businesses and residents. The senators are also preparing a legislative package set for introduction in Albany that will guide New York State's long-term recovery and mitigation efforts for this, and future natural disasters.

Senator James L. Seward said, **“Local emergency responders and elected officials have been working around the clock to provide for the safety and well-being of Mohawk Valley residents in the aftermath of devastating flooding. Now that the immediate threat has passed, it is essential that federal assistance is brought to bear to ensure that long-term costs don’t further overwhelm local governments, homeowners and businesspeople. It is also vital that we, as a state, prepare for future natural disasters and streamline our response approach.”**

Senator Joseph A. Griffo said, “This story has been told far too often in recent years. A comprehensive, forward-thinking strategy needs to be prepared to answer the state’s needs when a natural disaster strikes. Rather than being reactionary, this plan ensures that appropriate funding is available, workable regulatory policies are in place, and a boots-on-the-ground response can be quickly employed when Mother Nature strikes. We also need to keep the pressure on representatives in Washington D.C. to respond to our needs the same way they respond to concerns around the nation and the world.”

Senator Hugh T. Farley said, “Damage in the Mohawk Valley is extensive and people are seeking reassurances that their needs will be met. Further, we need to rewrite the state’s natural disaster response playbook. This proposal focuses on both the now and later of our response from the funding and legislative standpoints.”

Senator David J. Valesky said, “The governor has been a strong proponent for federal disaster assistance, and I urge him to continue his push for full FEMA benefits. In addition, New York needs to take appropriate steps to revamp the way we respond to natural disasters, particularly in rural areas. This package of legislation will help accomplish that goal.”

The senators’ six-point legislative plan will include the following components:

- 1) The centerpiece of their legislation will be a New York state flood and emergency relief fund –“Funding Emergency Relief Now” (FERN) to assist New York property owners when FEMA or other funding is denied by the federal government;
- 2) A refundable state income tax credit against property taxes paid where homes and businesses have suffered damage that reduce their value (S. 6060A – 2012);
- 3) A state task force on flood prevention and mitigation with regional subcommittees to help communities plan and fund flood prevention measures on a regional basis. The task force would include representatives of the legislature, the state departments of Health,

Environmental Conservation, Transportation, State, Homeland Security and Emergency Services, the National Guard, first responders, local government officials and local soil and water conservation districts with benchmarks and deadlines for action;

4) Enhanced funding through the environmental protection fund (EPF) for soil and water conservation districts to help local governments plan improved storm water drainage and flood prevention efforts;

5) National Guard directed and supported construction assistance in communities where flood mitigation measures have been identified;

6) Requiring a simplified and expedited reimbursement process for the state share of any reimbursable flood-related costs by local governments. Failure to process reimbursements to a local government within 60 days would trigger bonus payments to local governments to cover their cost of borrowing to cover funding shortfalls.

On July 1, Mohawk Valley legislators quickly called on the governor to declare a state disaster due to the flooding and to ask the federal government for disaster declarations and assistance.