



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Mark Grisanti

## **Grisanti And Ryan Announce New Law To Improve Erie County Land Bank**

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Erie County continues to have a large number of properties that are vacant and abandoned. These properties drive down the property value of neighborhoods, attract criminal activity and are a danger to the community. Erie County has an active land bank, formally known as "The Buffalo Erie Niagara Land Improvement Corporation", which is doing tremendous work. However, the land bank is hampered by provisions in the law which prohibits it from purchasing properties under the County Charter, a method by which many properties are auctioned off. The land bank legislation only applies to real property law, and Erie County is only able to foreclose on properties under provisions laid out in it's County Charter. The new law will correct this oversight in the original law, allowing the Erie County land bank to significantly increase its activity and get homes back on the tax rolls.

The law also amends the current land bank law that applied to judicially authorized sales. The law currently states that land banks can only bid on property at judicially authorized sales. Most foreclosure sales are not judicially authorized, they are done without involving a judge. The new law removes "judicially" and allows land banks to bid on property at any public sale.

The law also increases the maximum size of a land bank board to 15. The Erie County land bank has an inclusive board that is working with townships to more effectively solve the problem of abandoned properties in WNY. In order to be more inclusive, however, it needs to be able to function as a larger board.

By adjusting these provisions in the Land Bank legislation, Erie County will be able to manage its land bank in a more productive manner.

**Senator Mark Grisanti** said: "The current land bank law has proven to be extremely successful for Erie County and the City of Buffalo. These improvements to the land bank law will allow municipalities to have even greater abilities to combat and improve blight. With the successes we have seen from the initial land bank legislation, these improvements will continue to improve the quality of life for our citizens."

**Assemblyman Sean Ryan** said: "These changes to the Land Bank Legislation will greatly improve the effectiveness of the Erie County land bank. The original legislation was a game-changer that allowed Erie County, the City of Buffalo, and other municipalities to create a land bank that has the potential to significantly reduce the number of vacant properties that negatively impact our communities. These common sense changes will help to strengthen that goal."

**Erie County Executive Mark Poloncarz** said: "The Buffalo Erie Niagara Land Improvement Corporation has the potential to be a powerful tool in addressing the vacant property problem in Western New York. However, in order for the land bank to reach its potential, amendments to the Land Bank Act were necessary. I want to thank Senator Grisanti, Assemblyman Ryan, and the WNY delegation for supporting changes to the Act and ensuring the landbank's usefulness in the fight against blighted, vacant, and abandoned properties in our community."

**Joseph Kelemen, Executive Director of the Western New York Law Center** said: "The Western New York LawCenter applauds the New York State legislature for passing amendments to the Land Bank bill that will allow the LandBank in Erie County to more effectively deal with unoccupied, dilapidated houses, vacant buildings and open, empty lots that plague our neighborhoods. These abandoned properties demand constant and expensive attention from local governments, and this legislation will allow our Land Bank the means to take control of problem properties and leverage them to spur smart development and meet community needs."