



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Joseph A. Griffo

Griffo: Time is Running Out to Cure E.B.T. Abuse

JOSEPH A. GRIFFO January 24, 2014

| ISSUE: **FAMILIES, CONTROLLED SUBSTANCES, ALCOHOL, TOBACCO, FEDERAL PROGRAMS**



UTICA – Sen. Joseph A. Griffo today called on the state Assembly to support legislation that would prevent New Yorkers from using public-assistance funds on alcohol, tobacco, gambling or strippers. “New York has just 30 days left to prove it has tried to curtail E.B.T. debit card fraud and abuse, or lose out on \$120 million in federal funding for needy families,” said Griffo, R-Rome. “It’s important that we pass this legislation now, so that those on public assistance who play by the rules aren’t hurt.” Media reports and public documents have proved that E.B.T. card abuse is ongoing, with thousands of dollars being spent inside liquor stores, gaming halls and adult entertainment clubs. In his executive budget proposal,

Governor Cuomo included a provision that would prevent New Yorkers from using E.B.T. cards to withdraw funds at liquor stores, casinos and strip clubs. "I appreciate Governor Cuomo's support for this idea, and I'll be working with my colleagues to make sure his proposal makes it into the final budget," said Griffo. "But we should take this idea one step further. The Public Assistance Integrity Act, which passed the Senate twice, would also forbid E.B.T. cards from being used to purchase tobacco and alcohol products." The Assembly has not taken up the bill, deferring to the state Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance for administrative action. However, OTDA has not publicly said how it plans to get the state to comply with the deadline. "We can't risk losing the \$120 million that can be used for critical necessities, such as toothpaste, school supplies and clothing," said Griffo. "The time to act is now. I urge the Assembly to support this common-sense legislation, so that we can continue to receive federal funding to aid our residents most in need."