



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Joseph P. Addabbo Jr.

Addabbo Will Introduce Bill to Address Serious Fire Hazards of Cocklofts in Aging Row Houses

JOSEPH P. ADDABBO JR. September 11, 2013

| ISSUE: **BUILDING OR INSPECTIONS**

Bill Would Provide Tax Incentives to Homeowners to Eliminate Fire Hazards

Queens, NY, September 11, 2013 -- In the wake of a raging five-alarm blaze in Middle Village that damaged six homes, displacing seven families and injuring 11 firefighters, and may have been exacerbated by the existence of “cocklofts” in the structures, NYS Senator Joseph P. Addabbo, Jr. (D-Queens) said he will introduce legislation to aid homeowners in making structural modifications to their properties to eliminate these serious fire hazards. An Assembly bill sponsored by Assemblyman Joseph Lentol, A1336, deals with the “cockloft” issue, but never had a Senate sponsor. Addabbo stated he will carry that bill in the Senate and look to prepare additional legislation on the same issue.

Addabbo, who represents Middle Village in the State Senate, noted that cocklofts are often found in aging row houses and are generally defined as large concealed spaces between the top-floor ceiling and the underside of the roof deck on homes.

“I have learned that over the years, there has been growing evidence that cocklofts lead to extremely fast-moving and hard-to-control flames that put both residents and firefighters at extreme risk,” said Addabbo, noting that the ferocity of the September 9th Middle Village fire appears to be related to these structures. In July, a firefighter in Williamsburg, Brooklyn, was also injured when the presence of a cockloft elevated the fire in the building to a three-alarm blaze, and many other similar situations related to these attic structures have been reported over the years.

Under the legislation that Addabbo will introduce in the Senate, residents whose homes contain cocklofts would be able to apply for tax credits to repair them that would be equivalent to the cost of making the improvements and eliminating the fire hazards.

“Clearly, if we can do something to address the serious dangers that cocklofts now pose to our residents and emergency personnel, we should do it,” said Addabbo, noting that about 200 firefighters were called to battle Monday’s Middle Village inferno. “This legislation would lend a hand to homeowners who might otherwise be unable to afford the improvements, would help provide safer neighborhoods for all of us, and very possibly save lives and prevent unspeakable tragedies.”

Addabbo noted that connected row houses are no longer designed and built with cocklofts, owing to their dangerous ability to allow flames to move quickly from building to building. “So now it’s time to take aim at the cocklofts that still exist and should be closed off,” he said.