



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Joseph A. Griffo

Senator Griffo's Weekly Column #24: My Priority Legislation

JOSEPH A. GRIFFO June 12, 2014

| ISSUE: **BANKS, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, DRUGS, COMMUNITY REINVESTMENT**

As the Senate regular session comes to a close, I have redoubled my efforts to get my priority legislation passed before then.

In total, I've gotten 47 of my 119 bills passed so far this session. The Assembly has also passed 23 of those 47 bills, and the governor has signed 16 of them into law. Five are awaiting his review. I thank my colleagues for helping me achieve the success I've enjoyed so far.

Here's my thinking. First and foremost, a good state legislator is an advocate for his constituents. I'm occasionally asked by local government to help them enact special laws that would only apply to them – a good example is the regular reauthorization of a local sales tax rate, which can help ease the property tax burden.

The state also helped the city of Utica relax its residency requirements for paid firefighters so that they could find more qualified candidates. We gave the Mohawk Valley Regional Economic Development Council the authority to coordinate cybersecurity activity at Griffiss business park, helped expand a scenic byway system in the north country and renamed a stretch of road after a police officer killed while on duty.

These are not always glamorous, but they are very appreciated by our local community leaders.

I'm also chairman of the Senate Banks Committee, so I oversee legislation related to financial institutions. I try to strike a proper balance between protecting consumers and helping our local banks flourish, as they are a key employer.

I was pleased to help our community banks by allowing the state comptroller and the state Taxation & Finance commissioner to deposit twice as many state funds in local banks than they had previously.

Depositing more state money supports jobs at the branches and in the back offices. And the more community banks have on deposit, the more commercial loans they can offer to local businesses.

Two of the bills I sponsored that were passed were continuation of rules. These bills include an expiration date, so that we can decide whether the law is still working for the consumer and the creditor and whether to extend it.

For example: When people started opening check cashing businesses, we didn't have rules in place to govern them. It became like the Wild West; you didn't know who could be trusted. We've laid some ground rules and established some rates that keep the consumer from being duped. Those laws have been extended periodically, including this session.

Finally, I'm always interested in ways we can improve the quality of life in New York. When bath salts became the new designer drug, we got proactive. The Legislature worked quickly on my bill and ensured that these synthetic drugs – in any composition – were made illegal. We've also worked with snowmobile clubs and landowners to establish reasonable noise standards for sleds.