



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Joseph A. Griffo

Senator Griffo's Weekly Column #30: Honoring The Worker on Labor Day

JOSEPH A. GRIFFO August 28, 2014

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Labor Day is our annual opportunity to collectively recognize the hard working men and women who are the backbone of our economy.

From the smelter in Massena to the small business in Sangerfield, my district includes many highly motivated individuals. Many possess a technical expertise that is, frankly, unrivaled.

As a state representative, I'm committed to holding on to each and every skilled worker and to fighting the "brain drain" that too often plagues upstate. While we can't directly prevent business contractions and closings, we can do two things to soften the blow.

The first is to improve the state's unenviable position as being the nation's worst business climate. I'm always advocating for reducing red tape and lowering taxes on businesses – both old and new.

The second is to help Northern New Yorkers and those in the Mohawk Valley seamlessly transition to new jobs when their old one goes away. In talking to businesses, especially in manufacturing, I hear about a real skills mismatch. Jobs are available, but applicants lack the skills needed.

I've long been a proponent of apprenticeships and increasing funds for job training. My bill to address a "middle-skills gap" was passed this year by both the Senate and Assembly. This will allow people to afford the training they need for jobs that require education beyond just a high school diploma, but less than that of a four-year degree. Many of these jobs are in sectors such as metal fabrication and computer programming.

Nano and cybersecurity in the Mohawk Valley and biotech and telecommunications in the north country are key economic drivers, and I'd like to see locals provide for these industries as they grow. Many potential employees lack the skills needed to succeed in these jobs, which is why helping businesses that are providing on-the-job training to people – especially those recently unemployed – is so critical.

My Senate colleagues and I are also looking out for women in the workplace. We have also passed bills that would ensure equal pay for equal work, curtail workplace sexual harassment, eliminate gender-based discrimination in employment and help pregnant women still working on the job. Women earn 84 cents for every \$1 men earn. It is simply wrong to pay disparate amounts for the same job because of gender.

It is those who labor – from the union worker to the self-employed person – that create prosperity and opportunity. It is them we thank today, and every day they make our region a better place to live and work.