



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Joseph A. Griffo

Senator Griffo's Weekly Column #32: Helping My Community Trumps Partisanship

JOSEPH A. GRIFFO September 18, 2014

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New Yorkers, on the whole, tend to have a low opinion of politicians. It's understandable when you consider more than 30 current or former officeholders in the Empire State have been convicted of crimes, faced sanctions or been accused of wrongdoing in the past decade.

Assuming all politicians are just looking out for themselves, however, is painting with too broad a brush.

I was very pleased this past week that the Observer-Dispatch highlighted my working relationship with Democratic Assemblyman Anthony Brindisi. It's telling that our partnership is considered rare and it's a reflection of the increasingly partisan world in which we live.

The truth is: I've never given much consideration to anyone's political affiliation.

There are seven Assembly members and three state senators in the counties my district encompasses. Six are Republicans and four are Democrats. I'm committed to delivering real results for my constituents, but that simply cannot be done if I'm only willing to work with people from my party.

Sure, we have fundamental philosophical differences where compromise is unlikely ever to be found. But, to paraphrase Ronald Reagan, if I agree with someone 80 percent of the time, doesn't that make them an 80 percent friend and not a 20 percent enemy?

We've taken the same approach in my office. If a constituent calls with a concern, it's irrelevant if they're registered in my party or even registered to vote at all. It's our duty to

help each of them to the best of our ability, and we don't prioritize people based on if they're a registered Republican, or a likely voter or someone who donates to political campaigns.

Cynics will charge that's exactly what a politician should say. I can't argue against that, but I can ask you to judge me on my track record. I've worked with people on every level of government, from animal control officers to U.S. senators. I'd imagine a few of them didn't vote for me. That's irrelevant. What mattered most in the moment was: How can we do what's best for the people of this community?

Perhaps that's obvious to you, dear reader, but I felt it was worth restating.