



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Joseph P. Addabbo Jr.

Addabbo Questions Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Services Representatives About Emergency Preparedness Efforts

JOSEPH P. ADDABBO JR March 3, 2015

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Queens, NY (March 3, 2015) – State Senator Joseph Addabbo, Jr. raised a number of issues related to emergency preparedness with representatives of the State Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Services (DHSES) at a recent legislative hearing to examine the broad Public Protection aspects of the proposed 2015-2016 New York State Executive Budget.

Addabbo, the ranking member of the Senate Committee on Veterans, Homeland Security, and Military Affairs, inquired what steps are being taken to better prepare citizens for extreme weather events and other disasters after pointing out to Deputy Commissioner for Special Programs Andrew X. Feeney that his Senate District was hit particularly hard by Superstorm Sandy.

“The proposed Executive Budget contains \$3.2 million in new funding to support citizen emergency preparedness courses and training for New York residents,” he said. “According to DHSES, the goal is to train 100,000 citizens statewide in emergency preparedness, and we are told that 50,000 people have already taken courses in person or on-line to help them learn what to do when disaster strikes. I am pleased that DHSES is taking these steps, because knowledge and preparedness is the first line of defense in emergencies.”

The Executive Budget also proposes a Statewide Emergency Management and Response system, intended to improve coordinated responses with local governments and other entities – including the state and federal governments – in the event of extreme weather and other emergencies. **Addabbo** questioned the details of this proposal, noting the distribution of information should be efficient and effective.

“Even if we have the best system in the world in place and a great deal of information that could be useful to our residents in the event of an emergency, the most important aspect is making sure the information actually gets to the people who need it when they need it,” **Addabbo** said.

A DHSES representative noted the State attempts to provide disaster preparedness information to New Yorkers through a variety of awareness campaigns, with information offered through the Internet and relevant agency websites, as well as pamphlets handed out at community events.

Addabbo additionally voiced he shares concerns with other Senate and Assembly colleagues that DHSES Acting Commissioner John Melville was not present at the budget hearing to discuss the activities of his agency with legislators as negotiations move forward on a final State Budget.

As legislative negotiations on a final 2015-2016 State Budget swing into full gear during the month of March, with the goal of adopting a final spending plan by April 1, the Senator said he will continue to investigate efforts that will help to better prepare all New York residents for natural and man-made disasters.

“Sadly, we have been in the position to learn more than our share in recent years about the need to be prepared for extreme weather emergencies and the threat of terrorism,” he said. “While we may not always be able to prevent disasters, we must certainly try our very best to be prepared in ways that may mitigate the damage and tragedy.”

The Public Protection budget hearing ran more than 10 hours as various representatives of relevant state agencies, not-for-profit organizations and other members of the public presented testimony on a variety of issues. The event was one in a series of public hearings called by the Senate Finance and Assembly Ways and Means Committee to examine all areas of the 2015-2016 Executive Budget proposed by Governor Cuomo.

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