



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Joseph A. Griffo

## **Griffo: End of Legislative session brings property tax relief, education reform to address Common Core concerns**

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June 29, 2015

ISSUE:

- [Education](#)
- [Taxes](#)
- [Property Tax](#)

ALBANY -- State Senator Joseph Griffo of Rome and Assemblyman Anthony Brindisi of Utica announce that the end of the 2015 Legislative Session has brought with it significant education reform, as well as some property tax relief for homeowners.

The two legislators said they voted in favor of legislation that will provide an estimated \$3.1 billion in tax rebates to property owners over the next four years, as well as an extension of the state's property tax cap to 2019-2020; the cap had been set to expire in 2016-2017.

**Senator Griffo said:** "The tax relief guaranteed through this legislation reflects our commitment to help hardworking homeowners and families make ends meet with more money in their pockets. The continuation of the property tax cap is great news for the taxpayers and businesses throughout my district and the state, where it has already saved billions. By keeping tax growth at a minimum, it offers certainty

to homeowners who want to know their finances won't be crippled by out-of-control tax hikes. Families can better manage their households and provide for their children, while planning for their future. Likewise, business owners can look to expand and hire more employees in our state if they're assured local taxes won't suddenly skyrocket."

**Brindisi said:** "The property tax rebate will help make life easier for many Mohawk Valley homeowners. The average rebate for an upstate resident will be around \$185 in the first year of this four-year program. When you combine this with the previously approved tax freeze rebate check planned for next year, eligible homeowners will see an average of \$350 in property tax rebates. This measure, along with the continuation of the property tax cap, will provide the real relief that families deserve."

Brindisi and Griffo say they also supported legislation that changes procedures related to student testing and teacher performance. Among the reforms approved:

- Requiring the State Department of Education to release the questions and corresponding answers for standardized tests to teachers by June 1<sup>st</sup> of each year
- Eliminating the 'gag order' that prohibited teachers from discussing tests with students
- Making sure that teacher evaluations consider special circumstances of student performance such as poverty, students learning English as a second language, and disabilities
- Establishment of a committee to review all Common Core test items to make sure they are grade-level and age appropriate

**Brindisi said:** "These education reforms address many of the concerns I have heard about over the past two years at educational forums. They will help us refocus on learning, instead of relying on testing to prepare our children for success. I believe these changes reflect the suggestions parents, teachers, and students have been making here in the Mohawk Valley to improve the learning environment in our schools."

**Griffo said:** "All of the education reforms included in this legislation aim to accomplish a very significant goal: to better help our children learn. That's what many rightfully concerned parents and educators have asked of us, and I believe this legislation is a promising step in the right direction to strengthen our schools while respecting the jobs of our dedicated teachers. In addition to the historic \$1.4 billion increase in school aid that the Senate delivered earlier this year, these reforms will help ensure that the state's education system continues to take into consideration the unique circumstances of every student with testing that serves the best interests of the children and their teachers."

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