



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Tony Avella

## Senator Avella Introduces Bill Establishing Saint Patrick's Day as a School Holiday

ANDREI VASILESCU February 14, 2016

# St. Patrick's Day



(New York, NY) Today, State Senator Tony Avella introduced a bill that would establish Saint Patrick's Day as a school holiday in districts with a significant Irish population.

After the Department of Education (DOE) announced that parent-teacher conferences would be held once again on the Irish holiday, as DOE did in 2011 during the 250th annual parade, members of the Irish community petitioned Chancellor Carmen Farina to change the

date. Teachers were rightly infuriated that DOE's schedule would have them work all day and night through their sole cultural holiday.

Taking the argument one step further, Senator Avella argued that Saint Patrick's Day should be established as a school holiday, just as many other cultural and religious holidays, and noted that the Irish community is long overdue for this recognition. Using the language of the Lunar New Year school holiday bill that unanimously passed the State Senate, Avella quickly introduced a bill that would establish Saint Patrick's Day as a school holiday in City School Districts of one million or more, with an Irish population of 7.5% or greater.

New York State has the largest concentrated Irish population in the United States, 12.9%, and New York City itself was the first to host a Saint Patrick's Day Parade in 1762, which continues to be one of the most widely attended traditions in the city.

"It is really quite astounding that Saint Patrick's Day is yet to be recognized as a school holiday in New York, where so many Irish immigrants originally settled and where so many of their descendants still live. That parent-teacher conferences have twice been scheduled on this holiday is a testament to the lack of respect shown for this culturally iconic day and to the Irish-Americans that wish to observe it. New York State has the largest concentration of Irish ancestry; New York City was the first to host the Saint Patrick's Day Parade. Let us extend the same courtesy to the Irish as we have to so many other cultural and religious groups and let students and teachers alike to observe this holiday with their friends and family. It isn't just time we do this, it is time past due," said State Senator Tony Avella.

I commend the Senator on his leadership and his recognition of the historical importance of this cultural and religious holiday. All immigrants in the City and State of New York are entitled to honor their heritage. Recognizing March 17th and the significance to millions of New Yorkers in celebrating the Feast Day of Patrick the Patron Saint of not only Ireland but

The Archdiocese of NY will ensure that generations of students will acknowledge the cultural, spiritual, civic and educational contributions of the Irish to New York," said Executive Director of the Emerald Isle Immigration Center (EIIC) Siobhan Dennehy.

"We applaud and commend Senator Avella's bill to recognize the tremendous cultural significance of St. Patrick's Day to the Irish American community and seeking to eliminate the need for Irish American students, parents and teachers to choose between celebrating their Heritage and their educational commitments. We sadly note that the majority of New York's schools systems, when it comes to heritage recognition, seem to echo the concluding line of many nativist 'help wanted' ads of the mid-19th century: when it comes to heritage recognition in our schools it is 'Any nation or race except Irish'.

The Irish came to America fleeing famine and oppression, often with little more than the clothes on their back. Overcoming prejudice, they have risen through their own efforts to positively impact every aspect of American Society. This is a story that should resonate and be celebrated by all Americans; it is a history that should be shared with all children," said Neil F. Cosgrove, National Political Action Chair of the Ancient Order of Hibernians National Irish American Heritage Month Committee.

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#### RELATED LEGISLATION

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### **2015-S6747A**

- 
- Introduced

- ◦ In Committee Assembly
  - In Committee Senate
- ◦ On Floor Calendar Assembly
  - On Floor Calendar Senate
- ◦ Passed Assembly
  - Passed Senate
- Delivered to Governor
- Signed By Governor
- 

Establishes St. Patrick's day as a school holiday for all city school districts of one million or more with an Irish-American population of 7.5% or more

February 16, 2016

In Assembly Committee

Sponsored by **Tony Avella**

Do you support this bill?