



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Robert G. Ortt

Ortt Announces End-of-Session Legislative Victories

ROBERT G. ORTT June 18, 2016

| ISSUE: **ETHICS REFORM, ZOMBIE PROPERTIES, FANTASY SPORTS, HEROIN AND OPIOID ABUSE**



ALBANY – New York State Senator Rob Ortt (R,C,I – North Tonawanda) announced agreements early this morning including ethics reform, fantasy sports, and zombie properties. The State Senate reached agreement with the Assembly and Governor to close out the 2016 Legislative Session. Ortt said that the deals, which followed months of negotiations, addressed several of the key issues facing the region and the state.

The ethics package includes broad measures tackling campaign finance and lobbying reform. It also increased transparency and disclosure requirements associated with committees, candidates, and elected officials. These issues have received increased attention following local, state, and federal investigations into the New York City Mayor as well as the Governor's office. Significantly, an agreement was also reached on pension forfeitures as dozens of legislators have left the State Capitol following convictions related to their public office. The law will pave the way for a constitutional convention in order to strip corrupt officials of their pensions. Ortt held a press conference at the Niagara County Courthouse with local attorneys and judges on May 31 where he introduced measures to reform Albany.

"Convicted elected officials from both political parties sit behind bars, while taxpayers pay for their pensions," Ortt said. "Citizens demanded action and I listened. That's why I launched my shake up the status quo plan that demanded pension forfeiture for elected officials convicted of felonies. I'm pleased that we were able to score a long-overdue victory for ethics reform across state government to help bring integrity back to state government."

Another oft-discussed policy over the past several months related to daily fantasy sports (DFS). After the Attorney General shut down DFS operators DraftKings and FanDuel in New York State, legislators worked to draft a compromise on paid fantasy sports across the state. The final agreement will utilize start-up fees from large season-long fantasy operators to fund education and should strengthen Western New York Off Track Betting (OTB).

“This legislation achieves several key criteria for me. First, thousands of fantasy sports enthusiasts across my district will continue to enjoy their passion. Additionally, the 15 counties and two cities who receive funding from Western New York OTB should see their profit sharing revenue increase as fantasy sports partner with OTB establishments.”

Another key accomplishment hailed by Ortt pertains to so-called “zombie properties” – homes abandoned by residents typically after they received foreclosure notices. New York, with the longest average time to complete foreclosures in the nation, has lost hundreds of millions on zombie properties.

“Zombie properties have been a blight for homeowners and municipalities across Western New York. Municipalities lose tax revenue and must often pay for upkeep or demolition. Meanwhile, neighbors see their property values significantly decline. Thankfully, with leaders and partners like Assemblyman Mickey Kearns, we will be able to hold irresponsible owners responsible and truly help our communities.”

Earlier in the week, Ortt was instrumental in passing an expansive heroin package as co-chair of the Senate Task Force on Heroin and Opioid Addiction. The Senate, Assembly, and Governor agreed to numerous bills pertaining to prevention, treatment, and recovery. The legislation follows a year of hearings held across the state as well as extensive input from victims, families, and advocates.