



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Joseph P. Addabbo Jr.

Addabbo Lends Support to Bill to Increase Penalties for Bias-Related Graffiti

JOSEPH P. ADDABBO JR. June 16, 2016

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Howard Beach, NY (June 16, 2016) To more effectively underscore that graffiti intentionally written to encourage hatred against other people based on race, religion, sexual orientation or other basic human attributes “is far more serious and dangerous than mindless scribbling,” Senator Joseph P. Addabbo, Jr. recently voted to approve a bill (S.2655) that would increase penalties for this kind of bias-based graffiti to up to four years in prison.

“Graffiti is a continuing neighborhood problem that causes all of us a great deal of frustration when shops, walls, sidewalks and other public places are covered with what appears to be unattractive doodling,” said Addabbo. “However, when that ‘tagging’ turns into swastikas or hateful language, that’s when your garden-variety, irritating vandalism crosses the line and requires greater punishment.”

Under the legislation recently approved by the full State Senate, penalties would be increased for graffiti intentionally motivated by bias against a person’s race, ancestry, gender, religion, religious practice and other factors. Currently, graffiti crimes are class A misdemeanors, carrying a maximum sentence of a year in jail. This bill would raise the potential prison time to 1 1/3 to four years, at the discretion of the judge.

Addabbo noted that there have been varied instances of this type of activity in his district, including an incident last April when anti-Semitic and racist graffiti was found scrawled inside the bathrooms of the Resorts World Casino, and another circumstance of anti-Asian graffiti in Flushing last August.

“No matter where it happens, we need to strongly denounce graffiti that seeks to denigrate people based on their race, religion, nationality or any other human characteristic,” said Addabbo. “While vandalism of any kind is certainly unwelcome in our communities, we need to take a strong stance against graffiti that belittles others and that makes all of us just a little smaller by its very existence.”

Now that it has been approved by the Senate, the bill is under review by the Assembly Committee on Codes.