



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Joseph P. Addabbo Jr.

Statement by Senator Joseph P. Addabbo, Jr. on End of Session Action to Address Zombie Properties

JOSEPH P. ADDABBO JR. June 23, 2016

| ISSUE: **ZOMBIE PROPERTIES**

Senator Joseph P. Addabbo, Jr. made the following statement regarding the Senate and Assembly passage of legislation (S.8159) which included welcome provisions to combat so-called “zombie” properties, which are often left to fall into disrepair following foreclosure proceedings. The bill has now been signed into law by Governor Cuomo.

“For many years, areas of my district – including Howard Beach, Lindenwood and Middle Village – have been plagued by vacant buildings that have been left to deteriorate after their owners have suffered foreclosure proceedings and been forced to leave the property. These so-called ‘zombie’ properties have attracted squatters, served as magnets for vandalism and other more dangerous criminal behavior and have pulled down the real estate values of the surrounding properties.

“I am very pleased that a plan was approved at the very end of the 2016 legislative session to combat this problem that has occurred, and continues to occur, statewide as homeowners find themselves unable to afford their mortgages. The comprehensive measure, which has been approved by Governor Cuomo, attacks the issue of ‘zombie’ one-to-four-family residential properties from a number of different angles.

“This new law will impose a pre-foreclosure duty on banks and mortgage servicers to maintain vacant and abandoned properties and prevent them from disintegrating. Mandatory settlement conferences will be improved to better protect homeowners facing foreclosure, and a Consumer Bill of Rights will be established to inform property owners of their rights in foreclosure proceedings in an effort to keep more people from losing their homes.

“For tracking purposes, a toll-free hotline for people to report suspected vacant or abandoned properties will be created, as well as an electronic database of ‘zombie’ residences that will be developed and maintained by the State Department of Financial Services (DFS). In addition, efforts will be undertaken to create an expedited foreclosure process for vacant and abandoned properties to potentially decrease the length of time they remain empty.

“As a co-sponsor of similar legislation (S.4781) to address vacant properties, I am gratified that progress is being made on this issue, which is heartbreaking for those who lose their homes and a tremendous source of frustration for those living in neighborhoods where empty residences are falling down and being used for unsavory purposes. I look forward to seeing this legislation implemented and witnessing a reduction in the number of ‘zombie’ properties in my district and elsewhere.”