



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Joseph A. Griffo

## Senator Griffo announces \$100,000 in funding for Utica Zoo

[Joseph A. Griffo](#)

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UTICA – State Senator Joseph Griffo today announced \$100,000 in state funding that he has secured for the Utica Zoo to help renovate its primate building and housing for animals that are taken off the premises for educational purposes.

One day after the Utica Zoo wrapped up its 30th annual Halloween Spooktacular, Senator Griffo announced this funding to highlight the support the Zoo continues to receive from our community and state. Several weeks ago, the Utica Zoo also unveiled its Master Plan for the next three to five years of a 20-year outlook, and such funding will help the Zoo, in its partnership with the City of Utica, continue to expand and capitalize on the region's momentum toward economic and tourism development.

### **HOUSING RENOVATIONS:**

- **Primate Building:** \$50,000 in funding secured by Senator Griffo will be used to enhance the Utica Zoo's aging Primate Building, which houses spider monkeys, white-handed gibbons, golden lion tamarins, and tegu. Currently, the Utica Zoo also uses the building as winter homes for several animals that are not able to withstand the harsh Central New York winters: striped hyena, ring-tailed lemurs, and Chinese alligators. Since the Primate Building was built in 1927, this funding will help make the exhibits more natural, more visually appealing and more consistent with modern zoological practices. Visitors to the Utica Zoo frequently ask when the zoo will be doing something to improve the Primate Building, and this funding will be a significant step toward addressing that concern.
- **Education Center:** An additional \$50,000 in funding secured by Senator Griffo will be used to renovate the Sinnott wing of the Education Center, owned by the City of Utica, that is currently housing the Utica Zoo's education animals. These animals are typically taken out of the zoo and brought to places like local nursing homes and libraries, where individuals who may not be able to visit the zoo can still familiarize themselves with wildlife.

The building is barely large enough to house the Utica Zoo's current education animals, which includes several snakes and reptiles, a tarantula, a North American porcupine, and birds of prey like the bard owl and red-tailed hawk. By

improving the building, the Utica Zoo will then be able to expand its current collection to include more animals for people to meet and learn about, like an armadillo and a sloth. Because a wider variety of animals will now be available for outside visits, this will encourage more groups to take advantage of the opportunity.

The Utica Zoo also occasionally accepts local animals that have been rehabilitated so they can be showcased through the education program. By creating more housing space, which will also better accommodate animals that need a more seasonal outside climate, the Utica Zoo won't have to turn away these rehabilitated animals.

**ZOO ACCREDITATION:** By using this funding to enhance the Primate Building and housing for its education animals, the Utica Zoo will also be able to meet some of its requirements to achieve much-desired accreditation with the international Association of Zoos and Aquariums. The Utica Zoo has been working toward accreditation since 2011, which will offer better opportunities for future funding grants. This accreditation will also: provide the Utica Zoo with guidance on best practices for protocols and procedures; enhance staff recruitment and retention of employees who want to work for an accredited zoo; and allow the Utica Zoo to share in loaning animals from other zoos.

**Senator Griffo, R-Rome, said:** "A visit to the Utica Zoo is an exciting experience to be shared by many children and their families, and the Mohawk Valley is lucky to have such a wide variety of animals to observe. But for those who cannot make it to the Zoo, it is just as important to give them the opportunity to appreciate nature by having the Zoo bring the animals to them. I am pleased to have secured this funding so that the Utica Zoo can expand this important educational experience for our community and improve the Primate Building, while bringing the Zoo one step closer to the esteemed accreditation it deserves."

**Utica Zoo Executive Director Andria Heath said:** "The Utica Zoo is so fortunate to have ambassadors in Albany like our own Senator Joe Griffo, who understands the value the Zoo brings to our region. The Zoo has a robust presence, recruits staff from here at home and throughout the nation, and contributes to our local economy as a tourist destination. The support that is provided to the Zoo is intended to serve as a catalyst to multiply everything we have to offer, and we look forward to much continued success."

**Utica Mayor Robert Palmieri said:** “The funding secured by Senator Griffo on behalf of the City and the Utica Zoo for the renovation of its Education Center and Primate Building is a critical step forward in the Zoo’s quest to obtain international accreditation. These resources will also enable the Zoo to expand opportunities and diversify the types of animals it can showcase. I thank Executive Director Andria Heath for the great work she’s doing in promoting the Zoo and Senator Griffo for once again delivering for Utica.”

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