



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Joseph A. Griffo

Griffo, Picente, Simons, Migliori advocate for unfunded mandate relief legislation

JOSEPH A. GRIFFO June 14, 2019



UTICA - New York State Senate Deputy Minority Leader Joseph Griffo, R-I-C-Rome, Oneida County Executive Anthony J. Picente Jr., Oneida County Association of Towns President Benjamin Simons and Westmoreland Central School Superintendent Rocco Migliori today advocated for legislation introduced by Deputy Minority Leader Griffo that would provide relief from unfunded mandates that handcuff many municipalities, counties and schools.

Unfunded mandates from the state have cost localities and school districts hundreds of millions of dollars. When the state imposes programs upon a municipality without fully funding them, it often places local taxpayers and officials in the position of paying for services that they do not control. As a result, municipalities and school districts have to levy more taxes on residents in order to pay for the mandates from the state.

Additionally, these unfunded mandates take away local control and result in local priorities essentially being dictated by the state.

Deputy Minority Leader Griffo's legislation (S2017A) would impose an immediate moratorium on unfunded state mandates and would require that any state-mandated program imposed on municipalities and school districts be funded by the state.

The legislation also would establish a mandate review council to review existing state mandates on local governments and schools. This will help eliminate unnecessary, onerous and burdensome mandates, further easing the fiscal constraints that such policies have on local governments, school districts and taxpayers.

The bill is currently in the Senate's Standing Committee on Local Government.

"Local municipalities and school districts already face enough fiscal challenges that they shouldn't be burdened with trying to find ways to pay for mandates from New York State," Deputy Minority Leader Griffo said. "My bill seeks to protect our municipalities and school districts from unfunded mandates and allows local officials to set their own priorities. By enacting this legislation, we will allow Albany to be a good faith partner with our local governments and school districts to help them reduce their costs and keep property taxes down."

"This bill is essential for all counties and school districts to have the financial freedom to lower our tax burden and invest in what is important to our community," said Oneida County Executive Anthony J. Picente Jr. "Once free from the burdensome and arbitrary unfunded state mandates, like our \$56 million annual forced Medicaid payment, we could lower taxes substantially while investing in the things we need to move this community forward. I applaud Deputy Minority Leader Griffo and I implore the state Senate and Assembly to pass this legislation this session."

"I would like to applaud Deputy Minority Leader Griffo for his continuous leadership while always looking out for his constituents throughout his district, especially when it comes to unfunded mandates," said Oneida County Association of Towns President Benjamin Simons. "Every time an unfunded state mandate is enacted, it falls upon the residents of Oneida County's towns and villages to cover the cost of these directives. The people cannot continue to carry the costs and financial burdens associated with these mandates. Deputy Minority Leader Griffo's legislation would help to ease that burden."

"Unfunded mandates handcuff school districts primarily because, as the phrase implies, the expectation is that the school districts are left to figure out how to allocate the money to fund these new initiatives often after our budgets are adopted and approved by voters," said Westmoreland Central School Superintendent Rocco Migliori. "Compounding this is the fact that we are now living under a tax levy limit, which when approved in 2011, came with the promise of a reduction in unfunded mandates. The reality is that the opposite has occurred and there have been more unfunded mandates handed down. While many of these mandates are well meaning and endorsed by many, the problem is and has always been that there is no additional money to fund them. If somebody other than the local taxpayers make the rules then they should fund the rules. We support Deputy Minority Leader Griffo's legislation and appreciate all that he does in the interest of helping school districts and taxpayers."