



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Joseph A. Griffo

Griffo: Investigation, legislative hearings and repeal of Governor's powers should be undertaken immediately

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In light of revelations of a potential federal probe into Gov. Andrew Cuomo's handling of nursing homes during the coronavirus pandemic and the accounts of Assemblyman Ron Kim's conversation with the Governor, state Sen. Joseph Griffo, R-I-C-Rome, continued his call today for an immediate investigation and legislative hearings to examine this issue and other COVID-19-related decisions made by the administration.

Sen. Griffo also believes that the additional powers that the Governor has accumulated since the start of the pandemic should be repealed.

"The bullying of Assemblyman Kim by the Governor is unacceptable and demonstrates what can happen when one individual amasses too much power and authority," Sen. Griffo said. "Many of the Governor's inconsistent and arbitrary orders during the pandemic have had a harmful – and sometimes deadly - effect on New Yorkers and their livelihoods. It is very clear, as I have said all along and as has been highlighted by the Governor's threats to Assemblyman Kim, that an independent investigation, legislative hearings and the repeal of the Governor's extraordinary powers should be undertaken immediately."

In addition to any potential federal investigation or further action by the state Attorney General, Sen. Griffo is suggesting and introducing a bill that would ensure that a state statute perspective is provided as well. The bill would establish a panel to conduct a nonpartisan investigation of the Cuomo administration and state Department of Health's conduct with regard to nursing homes and the pandemic.

However, the Senate Democrat Majority has been reluctant and impeded efforts to uncover the truth and get answers for the families of nursing home residents who have passed away as a result of the state's efforts to confront COVID-19. For instance:

- Despite Senate Republicans urging Sen. James Skoufis, a Democrat who chairs of the Senate's Investigations Committee, to conduct an investigation and use subpoenas to get answers about the administration's handling of nursing homes during the coronavirus pandemic, he blocked such action. Sen. Skoufis even went so far as muting the microphone of Republican Sen. Tom O'Mara, the ranking member of the committee who proposed an investigation and the use subpoenas.
- Even while Senate Republicans asked for a bipartisan legislative hearing into the issue, Sen. Rachel May, a Democrat who is chair of the Senate's Aging Committee that has a responsibility for the elderly, ignored such a motion, saying, "I don't see the point." Sen. May also participated in a secret meeting with the administration but did not release important information.
- Since the start of this year's legislative session, the Senate's Republican Conference has submitted amendments 14 times that would remove the Governor's expanded powers. Each time, Senate Democrats voted against and rejected this commonsense effort to repeal the extraordinary powers of the governor, oftentimes citing procedures as an excuse rather than embracing the amendment and its purpose.

“Recent indications that the Senate Majority has now agreed to consider limiting the Governor’s extraordinary powers are encouraging and welcome news,” Sen. Griffo said. “However, I am concerned with what their proposal will ultimately look like when it is presented to the Legislature. Our best course of action should be to return to government as it is was originally constructed and intended with coequal branches of government working to address problems affecting New Yorkers.”