



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Joseph A. Griffo

Griffo Says Take a Long Look Before Looking to Close Parks

JOSEPH A. GRIFFO February 19, 2010

| ISSUE: RECREATION AND TOURISM, GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS, STATE PARKS, AGENCIES, BUDGET



Senator Griffo's Statement on Parks Budget Cut Proposal

Utica - State Senator Joseph A. Griffo (R-IP-C, Rome) a member of the Senate Committee on Cultural Affairs, Tourism, Parks and Recreation had this to say about the list of potential park closures made public by the Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP).

“After weeks of speculation, Governor Paterson and Commissioner Carol Ash announced today that that OPRHP's budget proposal plan includes the closure of 41 parks and 14 historic sites, and service reductions at 23 parks and 1 historic

site as a result of reduced state spending.

How were those numbers arrived at? Was it just an issue of attendance versus operating costs? Are these closures temporary, indefinite or permanent? Did the Department look at eliminating all major equipment purchases, including vehicle replacements, or examine cutting seasonal and operations staffing or opening some parks only on weekends and holidays or eliminate vacant positions? New Yorkers understand that the struggling economy and declining revenues could mean that the state has to spend less or raise taxes, but they also expect agencies to do a thorough cost analysis before closing sites, increasing usage fees or cutting services. The terrible irony is that since the beginning of economic downturn with New Yorkers living in the age of 'staycations,' park attendance has actually increased in most areas of the State. These budget cuts could be considered regressive and wind up costing the State more in the short term.

I will also be looking for an explanation of OPRHP's methodology in selecting parks to close. For the last two years, I've been questioning the wisdom of the State owning and operating ski-lifts, golf-courses, and resort areas. The Commissioner has publicly indicated that there have been no discussions regarding the outright sales of sites. OPRHP is making a mistake by dismissing these considerations."