



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Brian X. Foley

Senator Foley Helps Save State Parks

BRIAN X. FOLEY May 28, 2010

| ISSUE: **STATE PARKS**

Senator Brian X. Foley (D – Blue Point) celebrated the passage of legislation that will keep state parks open for the remainder of the year.

Today the senate passed legislation that will prevent the closure of 57 state parks and historic sites. The funding for the operation of these facilities will come from the General Fund, in the form of a reallocation of the revenue from the Real Estate Transfer Tax (RETT). By funding the parks in this way, the integrity of the Environmental Protection Fund (EPF) as a dedicated fund for preserving open space will be safeguarded. Keeping state parks open for the remainder of the year will save close to 4,000 jobs on Long Island.

“Our state parks are more than open spaces of land with benches, ball fields and play sets,” said Senator Foley. “Parks are gathering places for the community. They are where our children learn the value of teamwork while playing sports. They are where we all learn to appreciate the beauty of our natural environment. They are where neighbors come together to make an impact on their community or to simply enjoy one another's company. In these tough economic times, our parks have become even more important as local, affordable locations for families looking to spend quality time together.”

"The nearly 10,000 people who joined our site in support of saving Long Island's unique coastal and historic treasures will be grateful to once again enjoy our parks, which provide low-cost recreation opportunities for families and support tourist-related business in communities across the region," said Allison Lyons, organizer of the "SAVE LONG ISLAND PARKS" Facebook page. "We thank the Governor and Legislature for agreeing to open New York's parks and historic sites."

Over the last two years, funding to state parks has been cut by 25%, a total of \$46 million. Budget cuts last year resulted in service reductions in the form of shortened seasons and reduced hours at 100 state parks and historic sites. Despite this, the number of New Yorkers who access state parks has steadily increased. In 2009, 56 million people visited state parks, up 1.9 million from the previous year.

In addition to bringing in enough revenue to cover one third of the operating budget of the Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, recreational activities at state parks brings revenue to surrounding communities. Small businesses and restaurants, among other businesses, will lose the nearly \$1.9 billion in revenue that is now seen annually.

"Today is a great day for Long Island's families because we have crafted a solution that will allow us to protect our state parks in the same way that we have protected other items, like education funding, in the past," said Senator Foley. "I am glad that we have been able to bring this issue to a close in time for the holiday weekend."

Senator Foley will be hosting a rally to celebrate the parks remaining open tomorrow, May 29th at 2pm at Brentwood State Park.