



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Craig M. Johnson

## Senator Johnson Announces Passage of Landmark 'Dignity For All Students Act'

CRAIG M. JOHNSON June 27, 2010



The State Senate this week passed important legislation to help ensure that all students have a safe, harassment-free and discrimination-free environment to learn, Senator Craig M. Johnson, (D-Nassau), announced.

This measure, the 'Dignity for All Students Act,' aims to provide all students with a safe school environment conducive to learning by putting an end to harassment and discrimination based on but not limited to race, color, weight, national origin, ethnic group, religion, disability, sexual orientation, gender, or sex.

“Intimidation and persecution are lessons that no child should have to learn in school,” Senator Johnson said. “I am proud to have helped sponsor this legislation, which will create strong statewide protections for all students.”

In order to address these issues and establish a safer, more constructive school environment, this bill:

- Prohibits harassment or discrimination against students by employees or students while on school property or on school grounds.
- Defines harassment as the creation of a hostile environment by conduct, verbal threats, intimidation or abuse that has or would unreasonably interfere with educational performance, opportunities, benefits, or physical or emotional well being, or cause fear for physical safety.
- Prohibits discrimination based on an individual’s actual or perceived race, color, weight, national origin, ethnic group, religion, religious practice, disability, sexual orientation, gender or sex.

Similar measures have already been passed in 11 other states and in dozens communities across New York.

The Senate Republican Minority unsuccessfully attempted to amend the bill to cover the growing dangers associated with cyberbullying. The amendment, which would have derailed the Dignity for All Students Act that has already passed the Assembly, didn't go far enough, Senator Johnson said.

“The motive was well-intentioned, but the language needed to be stronger and more inclusive,” said Senator Johnson, who in 2007 created a cyber-bullying education program for schools within his district. “The Dignity for All Students Act is a good first step, but we must work together to created a comprehensive, bi-partisan package to protect our children from harassment over the Internet.”