



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Jack M. Martins

Senator Martins Meets With Italian Consul General Talo'

JACK M. MARTINS March 10, 2011

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Elimination of Foreign Language Regents Concerns Senator

Senator Jack M. Martins met with Italian Consul General Francesco M. Talo', Italian Educational Director Minister Antonio Benetti, Undersecretary for Italians Abroad Silvana Mangione and former Elmont Union Free School District Superintendent Dr. Maria Palandra regarding educational issues and foreign language exams. Students who are taking Italian in schools will not be given the opportunity to take a regents exam in future due to a Regents

vote that canceled the administering of the exam.

The meeting was coordinated by former Elmont Union Free School District Superintendent Dr. Maria Palandra, who is active in Italian community affairs in the greater New York area. Dr. Palandra has hosted many educational meetings with Italian education ministry officials and teachers. Dr. Palandra's work with International Italian affairs has involved the Covert Avenue and Stewart Manor Schools in the Elmont Union Free School District. On the high school level, Floral Park Memorial High School has also received dignitaries and educators related to Dr. Palandra's work with the Italian Consul and Italian educators overseas.

"Dr. Palandra and Consul General Talo' have brought a very important issue to light in our education system that needs to be addressed," said Senator Martins. "We have thousands of students throughout New York State who are taking foreign languages as part of their Regents action plan. It's very concerning to me that they will no longer be able to take a regents exam because of budget concerns. Whether it is Italian, Hebrew, German, Chinese, Japanese, Russian or any other foreign language, we need to give our young people opportunities to take the exam once they have taken courses of study. To cancel them due to budget constraints is just plain wrong."

Consul General Talo' discussed with Senator Martins the impact of cutting the language exams on students and the damage it would do to our future global economy.

Dr. Palandra noted that when she served as Superintendent of the Elmont Union Free School District she was able to institute a Foreign Language Academy for students on Saturdays. That same program is still in place today. Students are able to take different languages and learn the basics of French, Urdu, Italian, Latin as well as Spanish. "We wanted to enrich our young people and broaden their educational experience. This program, which was paid through grant funding, was not only fun for students, it was a challenge that

broadened their horizons. It was the foundation for future learning of foreign languages for these young people,” she said.

Senator Martins discussed the impact of losing the language exams and looked at several reports and studies conducted by experts on the subject matter during the meeting.

Undersecretary Mangione explored the ramifications of students not having the exam. He was able to clearly show that budgetary savings would not exist as students would simply take another language in which an exam is offered. “It really makes no sense and it is for that reason we are looking to State leaders to help us,” Mangione stated.

Senator Martins committed to starting a dialogue with Regents and the State Education Department on the matter. “It was an honor to meet the Consul General, his staff and Dr. Palandra. I know by working together we can begin a proactive dialogue with education officials and try to right this wrong for our young people. It’s the right thing to do,” he concluded.