



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Joseph A. Griffo

Griffo Criticizes Phantom Population Law Tucked Into Revenue Bill

JOSEPH A. GRIFFO August 4, 2010

| ISSUE: **BUDGET**

Griffo Criticizes Phantom Population Law Tucked Into Revenue Bill

(Utica) State Senator Joseph A. Griffo (R-IP-C, Rome) today criticized Albany for sneaking a massive change in the way New York State counts prison inmates for the purposes of drawing election boundaries into the revenue bill that funds the 2010-2011 state budget. Griffo noted that both the legislation and the methods used to approve it are wrong.

“Upstate communities that face an impact in terms of costs from the presence of state prisons are being told by New York City advocates that anything to inflate New York City’s numbers is good, and anything that fails to do that is wrong,” Griffo said. “Inmates in state prison for 5, 10 or 20 years are not heading back to their home communities any time soon. They are, for better or worse, residents of the area in which their prison is located. That’s a fact. To claim them as residents of a community they may not have seen for several years is ludicrous and just plain wrong.”

Griffo said that the debate over how to count prisoners is politically motivated. “The real message here is that the people who want to change the system want to use it as a way to reduce the ability of Upstate New York to stand up and resist changes that are being pushed

down our throats by Downstate politicians,” Griffo said.

Griffo noted that the Census Bureau has historically not supported the concept of counting prisoners in their alleged home communities. The report noted that the accuracy of prisoners’ own records, including their home addresses, are often inaccurate. Getting accurate data would require interviewing prisoners, the report said, which could cost \$250 million.

Griffo said the idea’s lack of merit is reflected in the methods used to get it approved. “The majority did not put this through as a bill to be debated upon in open session, because the full impact would have been clearly known, understood and opposed. Instead, it was tacked onto a revenue bill so that advocates of building up New York City with a phantom population could get there way, no matter what anyone else had to say.”