



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Joseph A. Griffo

Griffo Responds to Former Mayor Ed Koch

JOSEPH A. GRIFFO April 13, 2011

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STATEMENT BY SENATOR GRIFFO IN RESPONSE TO FORMER MAYOR ED KOCH

“Amid the highly charged emotional rhetoric that surrounds the subject of redistricting, I believe it is important to consider that the goal of this process is to produce fairness to the people of all parts of our state. Regrettably, redistricting is often pictured as part of a political strategy that pits one group against another, or part of the state against other parts. My test of a fair redistricting process is one that provides the maximum degree of fairness to every part of this state.

The Senate has acted to turn this concept into reality. After years of just talking about it, we were the first to pass legislation that would make changes to allow the formation of a truly independent redistricting group. This legislation is fair, non-partisan, constitutional and it passed the Senate in March with bipartisan support. The State Assembly has never acted on any redistricting reform bill and when they were leading the Senate for the last two years, the Senate Democrats never passed any legislation on redistricting reform. In fact, the public statement coming from then - Senate Majority Leader Malcolm Smith, who vowed that they would redistrict Republicans into “oblivion,” revealed that the political bias to redistricting still exists.

Calling a redistricting commission independent when Downstate Democratic political figures will represent a majority of those with appointment powers to the commission is simply mis-labeling a partisan commission in an attempt to push the agenda of one part of the state over that of the state as a whole. When there is full, fair and equal balance among the members of a commission, it will be a process I can support, and my record shows that I have done so.

I commend the work of former New York City Mayor Ed Koch to secure full and open Legislative action on redistricting, because government should do its work in the full light of day. Unfortunately, one of the bills that he wants me to back is one-sided. The Senate sponsor of that bill, Senator Gianaris is the Democratic Senate Campaign Committee chair. While former Mayor Koch and I both agree that to achieve a fair balance, congressional and legislative districts must have nearly equal populations; be compact where possible; be contiguous with respect to county, city, municipal and community boundaries where practical; and comply with the federal Voting Rights Act. I'm still convinced that in New York, the permanent solution lies in amending our constitution and not in the measure that the former Mayor is backing."