



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Michael F. Nozzolio

Senator Nozzolio Announces Legislation to Eliminate Costly Taxpayer-Funded Conjugal Visit Program Adopted by State Senate

MICHAEL F. NOZZOLIO June 16, 2011

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The New York State Senate today adopted legislation authored and introduced by State Senator Mike Nozzolio (S.3747) to save taxpayers nearly \$4 million annually by eliminating the State's controversial conjugal visit program.

"The conjugal visit program is a blatant waste of taxpayer dollars at a time when the people of New York can least afford it and I am glad that my Senate colleagues have recognized that there is surely a greater need for this funding elsewhere during this difficult budget year," said Senator Nozzolio, who serves as Chairman of the Senate Crime Victims, Crime and Correction Committee. "During these difficult economic times, we must critically examine every taxpayer dollar that New York State spends in order to find areas for potential savings. Conjugal visits are a costly and unnecessary prisoner luxury that we cannot afford to continue."

New York is one of only six states that still has a conjugal visit program, which allows State prison inmates, including violent felons who have committed heinous crimes, to receive unsupervised visits with their spouses and family for up to 44 hours at a time.

"There are no restrictions on who is eligible for conjugal visits, as long as they show good behavior once they are behind bars. That means individuals who have committed even the most serious crimes- murder, rape, armed robbery- are eligible for taxpayer-funded conjugal visits," said Senator Nozzolio. "At a time when the Governor is discussing closing prisons to save money in the Department of Corrections, it makes no sense that the Department continues to provide free luxuries for these inmates at the expense of law-abiding taxpayers."

Last year, Senator Nozzolio successfully fought to defeat former Governor David Paterson's ill-advised proposal to expand the program by spending \$800,000.00 on two double-wide trailers to be used for conjugal visits at Five Points Correctional Facility. Thousands of New York taxpayers joined Senator Nozzolio in voicing their strong

opposition to this completely irresponsible spending, putting enough pressure on the Department of Corrections to withdraw the proposal.

“The rights of our law-abiding citizens must come before those of dangerous convicted felons,” said Senator Nozzolio. “The \$4 million spent on this program every year would go a long way in providing job creation incentives for businesses in the Finger Lakes area and in providing tax relief for our already overburdened taxpayers.”