



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Andrew J. Lanza

## Staten Island Delegation Announces Passage of Phragmites Fire Prevention Bill

ANDREW J LANZA June 17, 2011

### **Bill Will Empower Property Owners to Protect Themselves & Neighbors**

The New York State Senate and Assembly passed legislation that will help protect the residents of Staten Island from phragmites fueled fires. The bill (S.4377/A.7463), authored by Senator Andrew Lanza and Assemblyman Michael Cusick, requires the Department of Environmental Conservation to establish a residential fire break permit for the borough of Staten Island, and allows property owners to cut and remove phragmites from their property. The entire Staten Island delegation cosponsors the legislation.

“For too long, DEC was more concerned with protecting these non-native invasive weeds than they were about enacting policies that protect residents and their property,” said Senator Lanza. “This bill will prevent the DEC from thwarting property owners the right to protect their property. Homeowners should not have to ask permission to protect their homes and lives. This bill will empower private homeowners with the ability to remove this dangerous weed from their properties without waiting on the ‘OK’ from DEC.”

“This is common-sense legislation,” said Assemblyman Michael Cusick. “Property owners have the right to diminish fire-starting risks that pose a threat to their homes. This is about the safety of our citizens and our community.”

“DEC policies and the weeds’ propensity for fueling summer fires put the lives and property of Staten Islanders in jeopardy while forcing local first responders to risk their safety to battle these often fierce blazes,” said Assemblyman Lou Tobacco. “By allowing homeowners to remove this hazard from their property and by replanting our wetlands with native vegetation, our legislation will greatly reduce summer fires and protect the lives and property of Staten Island homeowners.”

“I am happy we were finally able to pass common sense legislation to fix a situation that for many residents of Staten Island has become a nuisance and a danger,” said Senator Diane Savino. “Hopefully this legislation will give the residents of South Beach and others around the Island a new tool for fighting brush fires.”

Assemblyman Titone said, "During the summer months dangerous brush fires fueled by phragmites are all too frequent on Staten Island. Allowing our residents to create a fire break is a common sense approach to saving homes and reducing risk to our first responders."

"As a representative of Staten Island's east shoreline, I have seen my district suffer from brush fires as a result of these dangerous weeds time and time again. With this law, homeowners will now be able to protect their property and lives," said Assemblywoman Nicole Malliotakis (R,C-East Shore). "This legislation is a true victory for the people of Staten Island, and its passage is a perfect example of the wonderful things that our delegation can accomplish when we work together."

The bill will be sent to the Governor.

####