



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Mark Grisanti

THE BUFFALO NEWS: Grisanti Makes A Splash

MARK GRISANTI July 11, 2011

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What a difference an election makes.

A year ago, New York's 60th State Senate District was occupied — barely — by Democrat Antoine Thompson, who thought his position entitled him to milk the public for all it was worth: swelling his office's patronage staff; sending more than 1 million pieces of self-promotional bulk mail at a taxpayer cost of more than \$400,000; voting one way but claiming to have voted the other; taking \$8,600 in donations in the AEG casino bidding scandal. And more.

Things change. Today, that seat is held by Republican Mark Grisanti, who, with the help of Senate leadership, just ended his first six months in office with a whirlwind of notable accomplishments. The difference could hardly be more stark. Consider:

* Grisanti was outspoken in his support for a property tax cap and, while virtually the entire Republican caucus was similarly disposed, Grisanti took a bigger political risk than most (as he did with his vote for gay marriage), since political registrations in his district are overwhelmingly Democratic.

* Grisanti sponsored this year's UB 2020 legislation which, under Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo's influence, became SUNY 2020 and was approved by the Legislature. Among other benefits,

the measure will help to move the University at Buffalo's medical school to the Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus, bolstering downtown's economy.

* In what appeared to be a difficult decision, Grisanti backed out of a campaign promise to oppose same-sex marriage and voted for legislation previously defeated in the Senate. With that, he became a role model for anyone committed to equal rights.

* In a hard budget year, he secured \$1.3 million for parks and cultural facilities in the Buffalo area.

* He pushed to restore funding to the "4201 schools that include deaf, blind and physically and mentally disabled students. They included St. Mary's School for the Deaf in Buffalo.

That's a sampling.

Grisanti squeaked into office by defeating a distracted and overconfident Thompson last November. Most new officeholders in that situation would have played it safe, quietly occupying a back seat and not attracting attention on controversial matters like same-sex marriage. Grisanti made a splash, sometimes against his will, sometimes with the help of Republican leadership eager to show him off as effective.

The new senator is only a quarter of the way into his first term, and a lot can happen between now and November 2012. But in six months he's done enough of substance to make Republicans appreciate his work and to show Democrats, including Gov. Andrew Cuomo, that they have a legislator they can work with.

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