



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Joseph A. Griffo

Griffo Bill To Support Grieving Military Families Signed Into Law

JOSEPH A. GRIFFO October 11, 2011

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State Senator Joseph A. Griffo (R-C-IP, Rome) announced that Governor Andrew Cuomo has signed legislation Griffo sponsored to protect military families from being subjected to indignity in a time of deep grief. The legislation that would vastly expand the buffer zone around the funerals of veterans, so that no families will suffer the indignity of being insulted in their grief.

Griffo introduced his bill (Senate #5605) this spring after the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that government could not bar protestors from marching and showing signs and banners at military funerals, but could set a distance beyond which those protests could not occur.

Griffo said that the legislation is designed to ensure that military families already reeling from grief are not forced to ensure insults. “In short, the funeral of an American who has given his or her life for this great country will not be allowed to be made into a circus while family members suffer,” Griffo said. “Exercising free speech is an American right; protecting innocent victims from being abused by others is an even older and higher obligation.”

Griffo said that the court ruling clearly took the line of thought that funerals could be given

a buffer zone so that every if protests take place, grief-stricken family members are not faced with this added insult in their time of greatest misery.

“I believe that we have the responsibility, if not the duty, to do everything possible to protect and support the families of the men and women who serve our nation. To that end, I support creating a 300 foot Military funeral buffer zone around any military funeral, memorial service, wake, burial or procession, and that any organizations wishing to exercise First Amendment protest rights follow the process of securing a permit issued by the Division of Military and Naval Affairs, post a public security bond, and agree to refrain from coming within the 300-foot area. The legislation allows localities the opportunity to review the permit to ensure that they are able to be ready for any eventuality. Groups that do not follow these guidelines will not be allowed to hold their events.”

“This legislation balances the free expression that is part of our society with the responsibility we have to respect the families of those who have given their lives in the name of these freedoms,” Griffo said.