



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Joseph A. Griffo

Griffo Says New State Budget Agreement will Benefit Economy and Taxpayers

JOSEPH A. GRIFFO March 29, 2012

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Griffo: State Budget Protects Taxpayers, Boosts Economy Community College Aid Increase Will Help More Attend College

State Senator Joseph A. Griffo (R-C-IP, Rome) today said the budget being approved in Albany represents a common sense victory for taxpayers that focuses resources on rebuilding the economy.

“The Old Albany Way was to pass the budget late, pack it with taxes and fees, and hope to somehow or other spend the way to prosperity. It didn’t work, and in the new era of responsibility and collaboration that I am proud to be part of in Albany, we are working smarter, working faster, working better and moving our state in the right direction. We didn’t just pass a budget before the deadline – we passed a sound budget . The ripple effects of our work in these past weeks will reduce taxes across the state.”

Noting that overall spending has been reduced, Griffo said that the budget reflects his long-held priorities, including a commitment to spending restraint, no new taxes, and initiatives that will help the private sector create new jobs. “When New York City Democrats controlled the Senate, taxes went up \$14 billion,” Griffo said. “Since Republicans took control, we have

held the line on taxes and eliminated nearly \$13 billion in combined deficits without raising taxes. We provided leadership to cut state income taxes for 4.4 million New Yorkers - - ushering in the lowest income tax rates in 58 years for hard-working, middle-class families. We also are bringing much-needed relief to schools that have heroically held the line during lean times by increasing overall school aid by four percent so students continue to have the resources they need to succeed, delivering the majority of the additional aid to high-needs districts.”

Griffo noted that collaboration was the key to a productive budget discussion. “There are a lot of priorities, a lot of interests, and a lot of differences. The Governor demonstrated leadership and communicated with the Legislature to focus on our economy and taxpayers first. From there, we were able to refine his proposal so that it was more palatable to the needs of my district.”

The Budget includes an additional \$31.3 million in support for local community colleges, raising base aid from \$2,122 to \$2,272 per full-time equivalent student. Community colleges are important economic drivers that educate students, retrain workers, and partner with local businesses. This additional support will allow community colleges across the state to expand class offerings, keep tuition affordable, and hire additional faculty.

“Mohawk Valley Community College is an excellent example of a college that is trying to serve rising needs, and through this budget, we were able to focus assistance in a sector where the need is the greatest,” Griffo said. “I have been in dialogue with the middle class families of my district, and they want help getting their children through college. I believe that this is part of the solution, and I am glad to have been able to help families and students with college costs.”

Griffo noted that aid increases are possible because Albany is finally taking an axe to its own bureaucracy. “It took a fiscal crisis to get Albany to start streamlining and realigning its operations, but we now have plans in motion that will save millions of dollars, allowing us to use resources that used to support the bureaucracy to solve the problems of our Upstate families.”

Among the impacts to the 47th district, Griffo noted that:

* The budget contains a \$5 million fund to defend military installations across the state including Rome and Watertown.

* The potential loss of 200 state Department of Transportation jobs at the Utica office was averted when a realignment plan was shelved. Griffo stressed the need to remain vigilant in protecting state jobs in our area.

* An allocation for \$10 million for the North-South Arterial highway project in Utica.

* Funding of \$500K for SUNYIT personnel development for science, technology, engineering, math and nanotechnology fields.

Among broader budget trends that will impact the 47th District, Griffo noted that

* The budget restores the EPIC program to help fixed-income seniors afford the cost of

prescription drugs -- a key component of the Senate Republican majority's one-house budget. Under this plan, co-pays will be capped at \$20.

* The budget designates \$102 million, leveraging more than \$100 million in matching funds, to repair aged and otherwise failing structures, including levees, flood walls, dams, pumps and channels. The \$102 million will include \$18.5 million to repair state-owned dams, \$56 million to perform maintenance of flood control facilities such as levees, and \$27 million to implement coastal hazard and inlet navigation maintenance projects, plus over \$100 million in matching funds.

*The budget will provide \$89 million, leveraging \$143 million in total funding, to rehabilitate state parks, representing the single largest infusion in history of capital dollars for New York's parks. Currently, 83% of state parks are deteriorating. Projects will be funded in every region of the state, making improvements in 48 state parks and historic sites that serve 37 million visitors annually. This investment in New York's parks system will enhance the visitor experience and enable our state parks to reemerge after years of decline.

Griffo noted that the budget includes reforms that will help local governments and property taxpayers:

* To provide significant mandate relief for counties and New York City, the budget includes a state takeover of the growth in the local share of Medicaid costs, saving local governments \$1.2 billion over five years.

* In addition, we joined the Governor and Assembly to enact pension reform to ease the skyrocketing costs for local governments, school districts and taxpayers.

The budget also supports key economic development efforts.

* The budget maintains \$250 million in funding for the SUNY College of Nanoscale Science and Engineering (CNSE), continuing support to keep it the largest, most state-of-the-art, high-tech complex in the academic world. This investment will lead to the creation of jobs in the Mohawk Valley, Central New York, and the Rochester region as well as jobs created and retained in the Hudson Valley and throughout Upstate New York.

* Also included in the budget is an appropriation of \$75 million for the New York Works Economic Development Fund. This new initiative includes business development and job creation efforts to revitalize the State's economy. These efforts include capital grants to support employer projects to create or retain jobs, and infrastructure investments necessary to attract new businesses or to expand existing businesses.

* More than \$16 million will fund the Jobs Now Program to attract major new businesses and permanent private-sector jobs to New York. The program also provides financial assistance to encourage significant business expansion.