



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Joseph A. Griffo

## Griffo Supports Welfare Reform Bill Passing Senate

JOSEPH A. GRIFFO June 19, 2012

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### **Griffo Supports Welfare Reform Bill Passing Senate “Public Assistance Integrity Act” Would Comply with Federal Guidelines, Safeguard Taxpayer Dollars while Ensuring Individuals Get Assistance They Need**

(Albany) – State Senator Joseph A. Griffo (R-C-IP, Rome) today said the Senate today passed the “Public Assistance Integrity Act” to protect public assistance for welfare recipients from being used to purchase cigarettes, alcoholic beverages, lottery tickets or for casino gambling. Unlike Food Stamps purchases, cash assistance purchases are currently permitted under New York State law.

The legislation (Senate bill 7671), would also prevent individuals receiving welfare from using their Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) card to make ATM withdrawals from certain places, including liquor stores, casinos and strip clubs.

“The children, seniors, and families who rely on public assistance must have advocates to make sure that their benefits are being not abused, while the taxpayer who helps fund these programs also demands a vigilance that the temporary assistance is used for the necessities that these programs were designed to provide,” Griffo said.

Welfare recipients receive both food stamps and cash assistance, which are both frequently administered through the EBT debit card. Cash assistance allows individuals to purchase essential items that cannot be obtained using food stamps, such as paper products and school supplies, and to help defray the cost of housing and energy expenses. However, recipients can also and use this cash assistance to buy cigarettes and beer, or even to fund an afternoon at the race track or an evening at a local strip club.

Several states have already passed legislation to enact restrictions on the use of public assistance funds, including Arizona, California, Colorado, Indiana, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Missouri, Pennsylvania and Washington.

Earlier this year, President Obama signed the federal Middle Class Tax Relief and Job Creation Act of 2012, which requires states to limit electronic benefit transactions in locations including liquor stores, casinos and strip clubs by welfare recipients before February 2014. If New York fails to comply, the State will forfeit \$120 million in federal Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) funds.