



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

George D. Maziarz

## Senate Votes to Stop Welfare Abuses

GEORGE D. MAZIARZ July 8, 2012

| ISSUE: **SOCIAL SERVICES**

*Maziarz bill bans use of welfare debit cards for booze, tobacco, lottery tickets or strip clubs*

**ALBANY N.Y.**-The New York State Senate recently passed legislation co-sponsored by Senator George Maziarz (R-C-Newfane) that would prohibit the use of public assistance benefits to purchase alcoholic beverages, tobacco products, lottery tickets or adult services.

Cash payments to families receiving public assistance are increasingly provided through the use of electronic benefit transfer cards. This assistance is supposed to be used for essential costs like housing, energy, paper products, school supplies and other expenses. While most recipients follow the rules and use their public assistance benefits for the proper purposes, it is also evident that abuse does occur.

“Today the Senate took an important step to protect taxpayer dollars by joining ten other states in banning the use of public assistance dollars for gambling, alcohol, tobacco and adult entertainment,” said Senator George Maziarz. “It’s amazing to me that this kind of outrageous spending wasn’t made illegal years ago, as I have heard story after story from my constituents who have witnessed welfare money being spent in casinos or liquor stores. In passing this bill today, we are sending a strong message that enough is enough, and that welfare abuse simply will not be tolerated.”

S7671 titled “The Public Assistance Protection Act”, is also necessary to ensure that New York State is in compliance with a Federal law passed in February that requires states to maintain policies that protect taxpayer dollars from being used in any electronic benefit transfer transaction in any liquor store or casino or lose \$125 million in Federal funding.

“The passage of this legislation not only protects taxpayers by ensuring that every penny given to a welfare recipient is spent on absolute essentials, but it also ensures that our state will continue to receive its fair share of federal funding,” said Maziarz. “This is a true win-win for New Yorkers.”

The bill now heads to the New York State Assembly, where it is sponsored by Assemblyman Latimer and is pending before the Social Services Committee.