



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Tony Avella

## a Good Gamble: Avella Rallies WITH Elected Officials and Community Groups in Support of Legislation Creating a Community Grant Fund Program Funded Through New Lottery Game

TONY AVELLA September 28, 2012

| ISSUE: **ARTS AND CULTURE, FINANCE, SENIOR CENTERS, HISTORICAL PRESERVATION, VETERANS**



On August 30th, Senator Tony Avella was joined by elected officials, Community Board members, and representatives of dozens of non-profits, community groups, including senior centers, veterans groups, youth sports programs, and historic preservation groups, at a rally on the steps of Queens Borough Hall in

support of legislation (S7276 and S7335) he introduced in the State Senate that would create a new lottery scratch off game whose proceeds would be strictly dedicated to a new Community Grant Fund.

Since 2010, the executive branch of the state has eliminated discretionary funds that could be used to fund local programs in legislators' districts. The loss of these funds has placed tremendous financial burden on local groups that have relied on this supportive funding to provide vital community programs to the state's residents. This loss is on top of already draconian budget cuts that occurred in 2011 and the loss of private funding sources that began to disappear as a result of the national economic crises in 2008.

Community programs have been left in the cold in their efforts to provide educational, recreational, cultural and senior programs to communities that have relied on those services for years. This includes things like senior centers, youth sports programs like Little Leagues, afterschool programs and many, many other important community based programs.

In fact, many of these groups will be forced to close their programs after many years of service to the community. For example, without additional funding, the Greater Whitestone Taxpayers Community Center, which has provided essential services to the seniors of Whitestone for over 25 years, will be forced to close next year, leaving seniors without a place to socialize and keep their minds sharp and their bodies active and healthy through various activities.

Avella stated, "Youth groups, senior centers, cultural organizations and little leagues provide essential services and rely on discretionary funding to survive. These groups certainly are not pork. With declining sources of funding these groups need a dedicated Community Grant Fund. My legislation is an innovate way to provide these groups with the funding they desperately need."

"In these tough financial times, we have to look outside the box to create new sources of revenue to help our community-based, nonprofit organizations that are struggling to keep their doors open," said Assemblyman David I. Weprin. "These organizations provide vital resources and programs to our communities. Without them, our communities will suffer tremendously. This bill is about finding solutions and taking care of our communities. As far as I'm concerned, this is one of the most important parts of my job as an Assemblyman and that is why I have introduced companion bills in the State Assembly."

Daryl Mazlish, Captain and President of the Jamaica Estates-Holliswood-South Bayside Volunteer Ambulance Corps stated, "The Jamaica Estates-Holliswood-South Bayside Volunteer Ambulance Corps strongly supports NY Senate bills S7276 and S7335 known as the Community Grant Fund, which NY State Senator Tony Avella introduced. The Jamaica Estates-Holliswood-South Bayside Volunteer Ambulance Corps provides service for approximately 125,000 residents and businesses in a 25.5 square mile district. The Jamaica Estates VAC has been a steadfast non-profit organization for nearly four decades providing emergency and transport services for our community. As a non-profit, we have seen how community grants to volunteer organizations that provide a specialized service is a positive investment in local neighborhoods and yield high dividends resulting in lives being saved. We hope that other Senators in Albany will support Senator Avella's bills and that the members of the NY Assembly will join our Senator in this effort."

Laura Ahearn, Executive Director of Parents for Megan's Law and the Crime Victims Center applauded Senator Avella's efforts to assist non-profits and community organizations. "This innovative lottery

program will serve to help mitigate critical funding losses which have compromised the New York State Megan's Law Helpline, the Sex Offender Registration Tips Program and the organizations' efforts to keep children safe from sexual predators and assist victims of violent crime," said Ahearn.

Jim Trent, President of the Queens County Farm Museum stated "I am involved with numerous not-for-profit organizations, and one has already been dissolved after 35 years, and others are on the ropes. The Governor does not understand the dire consequences of going three years with no State support. The not-for-profits are an important quality of life factor in education, culture, seniors support, health, etc. There needs to be an acknowledgment by government of the important role not-for-profits play in the life of the community and a strategy designed to keep these groups from folding. Senator Avella's bill may well be the solution we are all seeking."

"As the director of the 144 year old landmark Poppenhusen Institute, I am extremely concerned about our ability to remain open, serving the community through our cultural and historic programs, due to the loss of all state funding. We need the Governor's help. Please Governor Cuomo, do not abandon the non-profits that serve this great state. We urge you to support Senator Avella's lottery proposal for non-profits," stated Susan Brustmann, Executive Director of the Poppenhusen Institute.

"Veterans need some sort of funding help from the state. Queens Chapter 32 of the Vietnam Veterans of America gets help from the state to run our programs. We are the New York City organization for indigent veterans. We bury, along with Hess-Miller Funeral Homes in Middle Village all veterans that have no money or family. We paid for the education for a veterans service officers and we pay his salary to get veterans all they are entitled too. Governor Cuomo has put the kibosh on our money and if we don't get the money already promised to us for 2010 that we already laid out money for and we don't get money in the 2013 budget we may have to shut down the services we provide for veterans and their families. Senator Avella's proposal the New York State Lottery that would benefit veterans and other civic organizations is a great idea, stated Paul Narson, President of Queens Chapter 32 of the Vietnam Veterans of America.

Ms. Rhonda Caruso, Director of the Angelo Petromelis College Point Senior Center, stated, "The seniors have been robbed of their health and information to keep them healthy. They deserve more than what they are getting. As the only senior center in College Point, there should be a place where seniors can live out the rest of their lives happy."

"For the past two years the discretionary money was taken out of the State budget leaving community organizations like Dwarf Giraffe Athletic League without the extra funding needed to supplement our organization that serves over 1,000 youth athletes. Dwarf Giraffe Athletic League would like to thank Senator Avella for finding creative ways to replace this void with his newly introduced Community Grant Fund legislation," stated David Legaz, 2nd Vice President of the Dwarf Giraffe Athletic League of Whitestone.

"The state cannot keep asking our citizens to bear the tremendous burden of cuts in services to due state budget deficits and simultaneously remove funding sources that are depended upon by local community groups that often step in to fill the void left when state government services are reduced or eliminated. The new lottery game proceeds that will be dedicated to the 'Community Grant Fund' will enable these important community programs to continue to operate," concluded Avella.

List of Groups who attended:

Bayside Historical Society

Queens Historical Society

Hellenic American Neighborhood Action Committee (HANAC)

Harriet and Kenneth Kupferberg Holocaust Center

Alley Pond Environmental Center (APEC)

Association for Neurologically Impaired Brain Injured Children (ANIBIC)

Samuel Field Y

Services Now for Adult Persons (SNAP)

Poppenhusen Institute

Transitional Services for New York

Crime Victims Center