



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Joseph P. Addabbo Jr.

Addabbo Introduces Bill to Reform Process for Awarding State Grants to Nonprofit Community Groups

JOSEPH P. ADDABBO JR July 15, 2013

Queens, NY, July 15, 2013 -- In an effort “to take the politics out of the process and help our deserving local groups serve seniors, children, veterans and others in need,” NYS Senator Joseph P. Addabbo, Jr. (D-Queens) has introduced legislation (S.5709) that will enable not-for-profit organizations to apply directly to state agencies to obtain funds for programs they operate in the community.

“Under the so-called ‘member item’ process in the State Legislature, elected officials were once able to obtain legislative grants to aid community groups in their districts in providing services for local residents,” said Addabbo. “Unfortunately, there were incidences of abuse and corruption in the process and these legislative grants were discontinued several years ago. The member item process was also repeatedly criticized for being over politicized. To address these issues, and help local groups throughout the state assist others without becoming unnecessarily tangled up in politics, I am recommending that we significantly reform the process for awarding state assistance to not-for-profit organizations.”

Under Addabbo’s bill, groups seeking state assistance would apply directly to state agencies for grants, completely bypassing the State Legislature and avoiding the associated partisan politics. The governor’s office, in consultation and cooperation with the State Comptroller, would develop the application process, and the state agencies would review and evaluate the grant requests to ensure that the money would be used for appropriate public purposes. Grants to vetted groups would range from \$5,000 to \$50,000, with capital project grants being awarded in the range of \$100,000 to \$1 million. Approved grants would need to be awarded

within six months.

“While the former legislative grant process was far from perfect, and was most certainly in need of reform and greater scrutiny to avoid the misuse of taxpayer dollars, its demise was extremely harmful for many local organizations that wanted to continue providing services to aid seniors, young people, low-income families, veterans, tenants, local businesses and many other residents,” said Addabbo. “The loss of this support was in many cases devastating and caused some groups to close their doors. I hope the new process I am proposing will help to ensure integrity and accountability in awarding state grants and will provide a new, level playing field for local groups who need funds to do what they do best: address the needs and concerns of their communities.”

Addabbo noted that the legislation has been referred to the Senate Committee on Finance for review. The senator plans on working to promote the bill during the remainder of the year in preparation of getting the bill passed in the next legislative session. “I hope to have the bill addressed in the context of next year’s negotiations on the 2014-2015 State Budget when funding levels are determined for state agency programs,” he said. “We need to make sure that our state government works hand-in-hand with legitimate, caring community organizations to improve the quality of life for all New Yorkers, and my bill provides a framework for achieving this goal.”

The senator is also currently talking to a number of his Assembly colleagues to introduce the proposed measure in their chambers.

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