



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Timothy M. Kennedy

After Push from Kennedy and Peoples-Stokes, State Finally Releases Long-Awaited Historic Preservation Funds for Corpus Christi Church

TIMOTHY M. KENNEDY August 15, 2013

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State expected to deliver funds just in time for this weekend's Do?ynki Polish Harvest Festival.

Founded in 1898, Corpus Christi Church is located in the heart of East Buffalo's Historic Polonia.

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BUFFALO, N.Y. – Last year, a radiant new cupola was raised high above Buffalo’s East Side and fixed firmly atop the south tower of Corpus Christi Church, located at the heart of the city’s historic Polonia. It was a moment of pride for Western New York’s Polish-American community, as an important piece of Buffalo’s history was successfully preserved. Corpus Christi had been promised substantial grant funding from the state, but more than a year after the south tower restoration was complete, the funds still had not been delivered, delaying future phases of the church’s preservation efforts.

They turned to Senator Tim Kennedy and Assemblywoman Crystal Peoples-Stokes for help, and the lawmakers went to work trying to track down where in the state bureaucracy the funds had gotten stuck. After identifying the site of the bureaucratic delays, it took a strong push from Kennedy and Peoples-Stokes to get the state to expedite the process and finally release the long-awaited historic preservation funds for Corpus Christi.

Kennedy and Peoples-Stokes visited Corpus Christi Church, a much-admired Buffalo landmark, Thursday to announce that the grant funds are expected to be released in time for the church’s annual Do yunki Harvest Festival, which runs this weekend August 16-18. The Buffalo lawmakers were able to free up the entire \$195,000 grant, which had been previously promised to the historic preservation of Corpus Christi.

“In Polish, Do yunki means a celebration of harvest,**Senator Kennedy** said, “but this year’s Do yunki Polish Harvest Festival will be a celebration of the state’s long-awaited release of historic preservation funds for Corpus Christi Church. When we got the call from our friends at Corpus Christi that the state bureaucracy was dragging its feet on previously-promised grant funds, we knew we had to do something about it. We refused to let bureaucratic delay slow down the preservation of this beautiful, historic church. Now that these grant funds have finally been released, we look forward to next phases of the restoration of Corpus Christi. But first, we celebrate Buffalo’s Polish-American heritage at this weekend’s 34th

annual Do yunki Polish Harvest Festival.”

“I’m happy to have served as a catalyst in resolving Corpus Christi’s outstanding payment of \$195,000,” said **Assemblywoman Crystal D. Peoples-Stokes**. “This will now allow them to pay their contractors for services provided over a year ago, and to move forward with the next phase of their historic preservation efforts.”

Jim Serafin, President of Friends of Corpus Christi, said, “We want to extend our sincere thanks to Senator Kennedy and Assemblywoman Peoples-Stokes for their successful efforts to secure the release of these state historic preservation funds. Their intervention certainly moved things along very quickly. We completed the beautiful south tower restoration back in June 2012. Unfortunately, our funds were delayed much longer than we anticipated. We are proud of our church’s preservation, as well as the parishioners’ letters that were stored inside the copper cross on top of the new cupola. There is significant history at Corpus Christi, and we are committed to preserving this success story of Buffalo’s Historic Polonia for many generations to come.”

Father Mariusz Dymek, administrator of Corpus Christi Parish, said, “Corpus Christi Church has served as a beacon of hope on the East Side of Buffalo for many years. We are proud and honored to open our doors to all those who come to worship, all who may be in need of our help and all those who come to visit this historical and architectural treasure. We thank Senator Kennedy and Assemblywoman Peoples-Stokes for their determined efforts to secure state resources for the restoration of our church and the preservation of Buffalo’s architectural history.”

In July, Kennedy and Peoples-Stokes called on the New York State Division of Budget to release \$195,000 in grant funds to Corpus Christi Church. The funds – which come from the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation – will help cover the

Church's costs stemming from restoration work on the historic site's south tower. Ongoing restoration work at the Church has cost over \$900,000 to date.

Work on the south tower was completed in June 2012, and all required documentation and receipts were submitted to Parks, Recreation & Historic Preservation in March of the same year. Parks' Regional Grants Coordinator approved the payments, verifying that Corpus Christi's documentation and receipts were all correct. Since then, however, the Division of Budget had not yet acted upon this and released the funds.

Corpus Christi Church was established in 1898 on Buffalo's East Side to serve the neighborhood's growing Polish immigrant population. The Church building was completed in 1909 after two years of construction. The building, clad in Medina sandstone, is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Over the past several years, Corpus Christi has undertaken extensive renovations to stabilize and restore the building.

A large portion of the work has been funded by a \$450,000 grant from Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation that was awarded in 2007. While over \$200,000 of these funds have already been disbursed, Corpus Christi was still waiting on the next \$195,000 payment. In pushing the state to act, Kennedy and Peoples-Stokes noted that the Church's restoration work received rave reviews by attendees of the National Trust for Historic Preservation's 2012 conference in Buffalo.

"The extensive restoration of Corpus Christi Church is a significant accomplishment for Buffalo's Polish-American community and the entire Western New York region," Kennedy added. "It is also an important triumph in our collective efforts to preserve the history of our city, state and nation. Corpus Christi was widely praised by attendees of the 2012 National Trust for Historic Preservation conference in Buffalo, and we must ensure it is preserved and remains standing strong for generations to come."

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Senator Timothy M. Kennedy represents the New York State Senate's 63rd District, which is comprised of the town of Cheektowaga, the city of Lackawanna and nearly all of the city of Buffalo. More information is available at <http://kennedy.nysenate.gov>.