



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Timothy M. Kennedy

## Senator Kennedy Celebrates New State Support to Help Meals on Wheels Prevent Hunger in WNY

TIMOTHY M. KENNEDY December 20, 2013

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*Kennedy says low-cost power from the state through the Recharge NY program will help protect Meals on Wheels' vital mission to feed the hungry throughout WNY.*

BUFFALO, N.Y. – Senator Tim Kennedy, D-Buffalo, today joined officials from Meals on Wheels for WNY to celebrate new state support that will protect their vital mission of feeding the hungry throughout the Buffalo region. Kennedy announced that an allocation of 86 kilowatts of low-cost power, through the Recharge NY Program, will be awarded to the

Meals on Wheels Foundation of WNY – which will help this hunger-fighting organization save substantially on energy costs. This much-needed savings will allow Meals on Wheels to direct additional resources to their indispensable work of delivering meals to homebound senior citizens and individuals with disabilities throughout Western New York.

In addition to supporting their meal-delivery services, this low-cost power allocation from the New York Power Authority (NYPA) will help preserve 74 jobs at Meals on Wheels.

“Across Western New York, Meals on Wheels delivers over 5,000 meals each day to ensure homebound senior citizens and individuals with disabilities don’t go hungry. They provide an invaluable service, and while they are incredibly efficient, it’s a reality that food costs can really add up. This much-needed support from the state will allow Meals on Wheels to further strengthen their vital efforts to feed our neighbors in need,” said **Senator Kennedy**.

“The economic impact of this crucial Recharge NY award will be measured in jobs preserved and meals delivered. By reducing energy costs, Meals on Wheels will be able to keep 74 Western New Yorkers on the job and help area seniors conserve their limited incomes to afford other necessary costs like medications, rent or heating.

“As our population ages,” Kennedy added, “the demand for Meals on Wheels is rapidly growing. Without this vital organization, far too many of our neighbors would go hungry every day. Our community owes thanks to Governor Cuomo for establishing the Recharge NY program and to the NYPA Board of Trustees for allocating this low-cost power to Meals on Wheels.”

“We are so grateful to the New York Power Authority (NYPA) Board of Trustees for approving Meals on Wheels for low-cost power and to Senator Kennedy and his staff for their support and expertise during the application process,” said **Tara A. Ellis, President and CEO, Meals on Wheels for WNY**. “At more than 5,000 meals a day, the need for our services in

the community is tremendous, and every year we must raise significant community support to close a sizable funding gap. This award of low-cost power will mean less financial pressure on the organization and will allow us to funnel more funds into what really matters – feeding the homebound elderly and disabled throughout WNY.”

The NYPA Board of Trustees awarded 86 kilowatts of low-cost power to the Meals on Wheels Foundation of WNY. This allocation will allow Meals on Wheels and its food vendor to maintain more than 74 jobs locally in spite of decreased funding from other quarters. The low-cost power allocation amounts to approximately one-third of the monthly electricity usage at Meals on Wheels. It's estimated this Recharge NY award will result in an expected savings of approximately \$5,000 annually – which is a tremendous boost to a community organization that relies heavily on volunteers. If measured by the cost of meals, this savings will be equal to about 1,200-1,300 meals each year. Over the course of the Recharge NY contract, the savings will be well into the tens of thousands of dollars.

With this substantial savings on energy costs, Meals on Wheels will be able to invest those funds back into what really matters – feeding our homebound neighbors throughout the region. Such an offset could be used to support food production, to purchase necessary new equipment like coolers and portable ovens, or even to push Meals on Wheels close to the end of its fundraising goal for a new 450 kilowatt natural gas-fed generator unit, which would aid the whole community in the event of an emergency.

In 2012, Meals on Wheels for WNY delivered its 25-millionth meal – which means Western New York is home to the second largest Meals on Wheels in the nation, out of more than 5,000 programs across the country. However, as the first of the 78 million “Baby Boomers” begins to turn 65 and retire, we can be assured that demand for Meals on Wheels will undoubtedly grow.

During the holiday season, many residents look for new ways to give back to the community. Senator Kennedy is encouraging more Western New Yorkers to get involved and volunteer with Meals on Wheels. Currently, about 75 percent of meal-delivery takes place by volunteers. However, the organization is short volunteers in the city of Buffalo. That means staff members have to handle the rest of the routes, incurring additional costs to Meals on Wheels.

“This support from the state is critical,” Kennedy said, “but just as important are the Meals on Wheels volunteers – the 1,500 good Samaritans who are the backbone of the program and our community.”

Meals on Wheels is also facing a critical shortage of volunteers in the Southtowns, especially Concord, Sardinia, Holland and Boston.

For more volunteer information, contact Meals on Wheels Volunteer Services Department at (716) 822-2002 or visit <https://mealsonwheelswny.org/volunteer>.

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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>.*

*In the picture above, Senator Kennedy stands with Meals on Wheels President and CEO Tara Ellis and Jerome Mootry, who delivers five routes for Meals on Wheels each day in the City of Buffalo.*