



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Jack M. Martins

## Senator Martins Sponsors Legislation to Protect Home Heating Oil Customers

JACK M. MARTINS March 27, 2014

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With consumers being forced to spend more and more to heat their homes with home heating fuel oil, Senator Jack M. Martins (R-Mineola) today introduced legislation creating new protections for home heating fuel oil customers. The legislation would create a statewide consumer complaint hotline and require home heating oil companies to inform their customers about cost-saving steps that can help them lower their bills.

“Home heating oil costs residents a fortune; in many cases, some have to choose between heating their homes and putting food on the table. Giving residents a one-stop shop way to file complaints against dishonest companies, while also ensuring that they are informed about steps they can take to potentially lower their energy costs, will help prevent them from being taken advantage of,” said Senator Martins.

Under the legislation, the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA) would be required to create a dedicated, statewide consumer hotline and website where consumers can file complaints about home heating fuel oil companies. NYSERDA would be empowered to refer complaints to the proper authorities so that they can be resolved.

Additionally, home heating fuel oil companies would be required, prior to the first annual delivery or execution of a delivery contract, to provide their consumers with:

- The contact information of NYSERDA's statewide consumer assistance hotline for home heating fuel oil customers;
- An explanation of the main components of the price of home heating oil;
- Energy conservation tips on how residents can lower their home heating oil costs, provided by NYSERDA;
- Information about state and federal programs which are available to assist residents with their heating costs, such as the Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP), which would be developed by the New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance.

New York State is the number one consumer of home heating fuel oil in the country according to the US Energy Information Administration, and prices have been skyrocketing. A February 2014 report by Bloomberg News reported that, at the time, New Yorkers were paying an average of \$4.482 a gallon for home heating fuel oil, the highest price on record going back to 1990.