



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Joseph A. Griffo

Griffo, Brindisi: More Family Court Judges Coming

JOSEPH A. GRIFFO April 8, 2014

| ISSUE: **JUDICIARY**



UTICA - Sen. Joseph A. Griffo and Assemblyman Anthony Brindisi jointly announced that they will work to ensure that Oneida County is assigned an additional Family Court judge.

The 2014-15 state budget includes \$5 million for the addition of 20 new Family Court judges. The Unified Court System believes Oneida County is among those with the greatest need for a second judge, based on its number of filings.

“Family Court judges make one of the most important decisions in peoples’ lives – namely, who gets custody of the children. It’s shameful, therefore, that this has long been the most under-resourced court in the entire system,” said Griffo, R-Rome. “Legislation is required to add more judges, so the assemblyman and I will be working closely to make sure that Oneida

County receives one of the 20 positions.”

“I have heard many stories from people within the court system, or who have had cases before Family Court, and this funding is greatly needed to streamline the judicial system in Oneida County,” said Brindisi, D-Utica.

Collectively, the state’s 153 judges handle more than 700,000 filings. There have been four judgeships added in counties outside New York City since 1989, and zero in the city since 1991. Family Court judges handle, on average, a caseload that is four times greater than Supreme Court judges and 10 times greater than County Court judges handling felony crimes.

In her 2007 “State of Judiciary,” Chief Administrative Judge Judith Kaye noted the Family Court was “desperately short of judicial resources” and asked the Legislature to create 39 additional judgeships. This request was tabled amidst the 2008 financial crisis, exacerbating issues.

Calendar delays lead to critical decisions being unmet, including whether children could return home or visit their parents, be placed with siblings or be adopted. In a federal government review, New York ranked third-to-last in the amount of time a child spends in foster care.

“Oneida County government is a service provider to those who are in the most need. Every day that fundamental undertaking puts our Department of Social Services and attorneys inside the Oneida County Family Court,” said Oneida County Executive Anthony J. Picente Jr. “We see firsthand how these courts are overworked to the point of complete saturation. For the sake of the parents and children involved, I strongly support Senator Griffo and Assemblyman Brindisi’s efforts to secure Oneida County one of the 20 new judicial positions that have been recently created.”

“The people who are awaiting a decision before the Oneida County Family Court should not have to put their lives on hold due to unnecessary delays,” said Brindisi. “Adding a judgeship will help ensure that court cases are handled in a timely and efficient manner.”

“These delays have caused incalculable trauma to children and families, and unnecessarily subjected domestic violence victims to continued harm,” said Griffo. “It also results in repeat appearances by court attorneys and increased state and county payments to foster care – a great waste of taxpayer money. This \$5 million allocation is a good step in improving our flawed Family Court system.”