



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Tony Avella

Avella to Introduce Bill Reforming the Queens Public Library

TONY AVELLA April 14, 2014

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NEWS in Senator Tony Avella Senate District

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The bill will aim to strengthen oversight and promote transparency

(Bayside, Queens) Today, State Senator Tony Avella announced new legislation he is introducing in the State Senate which would reform the operation of the Queens Public Library in order to strengthen oversight and promote transparency within the institution.

The legislation comes on the heels of the recent controversy surrounding the excessive annual salary, questionable outside employment and outrageous office renovations by the

Queens Borough Public Libraries Executive Director Thomas Galante, which had since prompted a City Council hearing, a city audit, and press reports of investigations by the FBI, US Attorney and City Department of Investigations.

Senator Avella was the first elected official to call on Mr. Galante to resign due to the controversy. Unfortunately, the Board of Trustees, which oversees the Library, failed to suspend Mr. Galante earlier this month by voting 9-9. The tie vote resulted in Mr. Galante keeping his job and \$392,000 per year salary.

In order to rectify this situation and enact real change within the Queens Public Library, Senator Avella's legislation aims to entirely reform the organization by establishing new guidelines for the Library and restructure the Board of Trustees.

Specifically, the legislation would:

- Require the appointment of an entire new board of trustees and reduce the total number of trustees to 11, effective January 2015
- Require that at least one trustee be a certified public accountant, one trustee must be a district manager of one of the community boards in the borough of Queens, one trustee must be a chair of one of the community boards in the borough of Queens, and two trustees must be librarians (or library science degree holder)
- Make all three public libraries in the City of New York subject to City Conflicts of Interest Laws and explicitly subject to State and City Freedom of Information Laws
- Prohibit outside employment for any executive director and any key library executive personnel of Queens Public Libraries who receive a staff salary in excess of \$150,000 and require the approval of the Board of Trustees for any outside employment for all other executive

personnel

- Require the trustees to hold a yearly public budget hearing prior to adoption of the budget and provide a 30 day public comment period prior to its adoption and to report all revenue sources for the budget, both public and private

In addition, the bill will include some of the proposals made by Queens Borough President Melinda Katz including the creation of an audit committee, labor committee and removal provisions for board members.

“The reports of excessive payments, lavish renovations and questionable employment practices have compromised the integrity of the entire Queens Public Library,” stated Senator Tony Avella. “Such clear mismanagement calls for drastic action. Not just feel good legislation but meaningful change that provides for more transparency and gives the public an opportunity to weigh in on the budget of an institution that relies heavily if not entirely on City, State and Federal funds.”