



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Tony Avella

## Senator Avella Announces Legislation Mandating City to Clear Snow and Ice From Fire Hydrants

TONY AVELLA May 1, 2014



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(Bellerose, Queens) Today, Senator Tony Avella was joined by Mr. Harry Nespoli, Head of the Uniformed Sanitationmen's Association Union Local 831, in announcing new legislation in the State Senate, introduced by Avella, that would require the City Department of Sanitation to remove any snow or ice accumulation from fire hydrants in the City of New York (Bill #S6956).

Current City regulations mandate property owners, lessees or tenants to clear snow or ice from the fire hydrant in front of their property, creating an unnecessary burden. As we have experienced during the unusually active snow season this past the winter, locating and clearing snow covered hydrants can be an extremely difficult and costly task for some individuals and potentially hazardous for senior citizens and persons with disabilities. Among these challenges, snow covered fire hydrants presented a major public safety concern.

Senator Avella's legislation would immediately rectify this issue by transferring the responsibility to the Sanitation Department, which can utilize equipment and manpower to effectively remove snow and ice from City owned fire hydrants.

"I can understand why the City placed the responsibility of clearing the hydrants on the property owners but we have to ask ourselves, is this the best possible option? Absolutely not," stated Senator Avella. "Given the significant changes in weather that we have experienced, with a significant increase in snow accumulation, it is simply unfair to continue expecting property owners, especially those who are senior citizens and persons with disabilities to constantly worry about who will take care of the hydrant in front of their home. You can very well imagine a senior who is not physically able to remove the snow and who can't afford to hire somebody to remove it – how much of a fear this issue can instill in them if there should be a fire on their block. The Fire Department would have to spend extra time locating the hydrant and then spending precious minutes trying to dig it out. We must better address this issue and my bill does just that."

Mr. Nespoli stated, "I am in support of this bill, I think it's very important. Just the experience of what this winter was and the big key factor is just how cold it was. Snow hits and melts but it didn't go away this year. This year, the cold kept it around. God forbid there is a fire somewhere - it takes minutes to spread and the results can be fatal. As long as we can help out in any way, we will do it. We'll open up those fire hydrants because it's that important. Myself, to see a senior citizen go out there and chip away at that snow – it should

not have to come to that. My workforce will absolutely do it for them once this bill passes.”

Mr. Jerry Wind, President of the Bellerose Hillside Civic Association stated, “It goes without saying how important it is to clear snow from fire hydrants. But it is just too big a task for some seniors who face health ailments. This winter, I was maintaining the hydrant in front of my house despite undergoing major heart operation just a few years ago. There are plenty of people, especially in my civic, elderly people, that can’t even get out their front door when it snows this bad. This legislation is a great idea and I commend the Sanitation Union for supporting this bill.”

Senator Avella concluded, “This is a common sense solution for the City to make sure that residential blocks in the boroughs other than Manhattan are protected in case of a fire. Safety must come first.”