



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Tony Avella

Avella Denounces Unjust Minimum Water Charges

TONY AVELLA May 19, 2014

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NEWS in Senator Tony Avella Senate District

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LEASE:

Continues to advocate for passage of his bill in Senate which would eliminate the minimum charge in the City of New York

(BAYSIDE, Queens) **Today**, Senator Tony Avella rallied with civic leaders and area residents to advocate for the passage of his legislation in the State Senate, which would abolish the minimum charge for the supply of water collected by the New York City Water Board. The bill would ensure homeowners are charged only for the amount of water used, without any excess fees.

Senator Avella's legislation (S.6154), gained key momentum in the Senate earlier this week by passing the Cities Committee on Wednesday.

“I was around when this process of charging a minimum water usage rate was first introduced by the government,” stated Senator Tony Avella. “The premise, at the time, was to encourage people to conserve water and only pay for the amount that they use. Unfortunately, over the years, this practice has lost that core message and it seems, has become a revenue generating procedure for the City of New York instead. Well if the core reason for the program was to only pay for the water you use, why is there a minimum charge? If we are going to charge for consumption, then the City should only charge for consumption and not penalize people who are trying to conserve their water usage. This is something that must be better addressed, without forcing people to pay more money than the amount used, which is often the case with senior citizens, single individuals, and those who frequently leave town. The minimum water charge no longer makes sense for the City of New York.”

Mr. Stuart Hersh, Douglaston resident who wrote to the Senator regarding this issue stated, “It recently occurred to me that the Water Department is punishing us, senior citizens. We tend to often be alone once we reach a certain age – I celebrated my 80th birthday just last month, and as a result, use much less water inside our homes. Yet we are being punished for conserving instead of getting discounts. And I cannot understand why a service like water and sewer does that. It is actually abusive at this point in our lives.”

Mr. Richard Hellenbrecht, President of the Queens Civic Congress, added, “This is a very important issue, especially to senior citizens and singles who live alone and to other folks who don’t use much water. It is ridiculous to have a minimum amount that has to be paid no matter what. We, at the Queens Civic Congress represent people throughout the entire borough and there are many, many folks who live in that situation. To be required to pay a certain amount of money no matter what the water charges are, is crazy. Let’s go back to a system where water was charged for the amount used, without any minimum charges. Senator Avella has our full support on this issue.”

Mr. Jerry Wind, President of the Bellerose-Hillside Civic Association, stated, “I would like to thank Senator Avella for pushing this legislation. I just joined the ranks of senior citizens this past March and am also on a fixed income. What boggles my mind is that the Water Department has gotten rate increases every single year, why is that not enough? The money they receive should be going toward infrastructural improvement but there are many flooding prone locations throughout the Borough which have yet to be addressed. It is time to end the mismanagement.”

Mr. Kim Cody, President of the Greater Whitestone Taxpayer Civic Association, stated, “We have quite a few members of our organization who are senior citizens. A lot of them are snowbirds, they pack up their belongings around Thanksgiving and they head south. They do not come back till May. They are not using any water in their home at all, yet they are forced to pay this ridiculous charge. The City has increased our prices for water tremendously over the last ten years. It’s unfathomable that they still want to collect a flat rate when you’re not even using the service.”

Henry Euler, First Vice President of the Auburndale Improvement Association, stated, “I think Senator Avella’s bill would encourage more people to conserve water. Water is a precious commodity and with climate change, we don’t know whether we will be getting more or less rain and we need to conserve as much water as possible. Right now, people think that because they have to pay the minimum charge anyway, it doesn’t matter if they let the water run in the faucet or a hose in the garden. But if they are paying only for what they use, they will be more conscientious and conservative in their usage. I applaud Senator Avella for sponsoring this legislation and I hope it passes.”

Thomas Casey, Vice Chairman of the Queens County Conservative Party, stated, “I am here to support the Senator Avella and his efforts to reduce the water charge. His bill demonstrates fiscal responsibility, particularly at a time when water rates and water issues are of concern to all of Queens homeowners. It takes courage for the Senator to stand up and take this position, we applaud it.”

Senator Avella concluded, “Not only can conservation of water help people on fixed incomes to control their costs, but it is also an important duty given the ever-increasing demands we are placing on our environment. The minimum water charge really ends up encouraging the opposite, and people who try to conserve wind up paying more money than what they should. I am happy that my legislation is now eligible to go on the floor of the Senate for a majority vote and I am calling upon the legislature to pass this bill into law.”