



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Robert G. Ortt

Sen. Ortt Calls on State Education Department to Create Permanent Plan in Cases of Extreme Weather Events

ROBERT G. ORTT February 1, 2015

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Senator Robert Ortt (R,C,I-North Tonawanda) is calling on the State Education Department to enforce a level playing field for all school districts during an extreme weather event.

The senator is drafting legislation to help alleviate inconsistencies. Ortt is proposing the SED takes a proactive approach for students who miss Regents exams due to inclement weather and adopt a permanent solution rather than enforcing a “one-time exception.”

That same leeway, however, was not extended to districts here in Western New York during last year’s Polar Vortex. Instead, students who missed state exams had to wait until June to retake tests, causing an interruption in their studies.

“Making students wait several months for a make-up exam was not only an inconvenience to many who planned on graduating in January, but also caused them to lose focus,” said Sen. Ortt. “While I applaud the SED’s recent decision, we need to ensure all school districts are afforded that same opportunity.”

Senator Ortt shared his concerns in a letter to the New York State Board of Regents. The letter is included below.

January 30, 2015

New York State Board of Regents

89 Washington Avenue Board of Regents

Room 110 EB

Albany, New York 12234

Dear Board Member:

With recent inclement weather experienced in New York City and Long Island, State Education Department (SED) granted leeway to school districts impacted by the storms. Districts were allowed to reschedule state examinations if they submitted plans for keeping them secured. I applaud this decision as it balances important goals such as public safety, exam integrity, and student advancement.

I must however, raise objection with the fact that Western New York schools have not been offered the same courtesy. Last January, when schools across the region were closed due to the extreme cold associated with the Polar Vortex, students who missed exams were forced to wait until Spring to take them again. This was especially inconvenient for students scheduled to graduate in January. Many of these students were already delayed in their academic progress, further hindered by these additional setbacks beyond their control.

Rather than categorize test make-ups resulting from the January 27, 2015 storm as a "one-time exception," it seems prudent for SED to adopt an approach that protects the best interests of students and schools in a consistent manner. I look forward to working with you as we demonstrate that we value the safety and academic progress of all of our students equally.

Sincerely,

Robert G. Ortt

Senator 62nd District