



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Leroy Comrie

Senator Comrie Announces Bill Protecting Minors from Harmful Advertisements

LEROY COMRIE April 28, 2015

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Legislature Called on to Prohibit Alcohol and Sexually Suggestive Ads on State-Maintained Property

(Hollis, Queens) **Senator Leroy G. Comrie** (D-Hollis) was proud to announce the introduction of Senate Bill [S.4455-2015](#), new legislation that will moderate advertising alcoholic beverages and provocative content to minors on state-owned property. This legislation was announced this afternoon at a press conference attended by Assembly Member Bill Scarborough, Council Member Ruben Wills and leaders from the South Queens community.

The legislation comes on the heels of community requests to limit advertising perceived to be harmful to youth. Advertising space owned and operated by the MTA is bought by companies that beckon riders to provocative behavior, depicting consequence-free lifestyles that increase the likelihood of [unhealthy habits among minors](#) and minimize the perceived risks of underage drinking, [unprotected sex](#) and risky behavior. Underage youth receive substantial exposure to this marketing, and multiple longitudinal studies have correlated this exposure with greater likelihood of drinking, or if young people have already initiated alcohol use, drinking more. Exposure to provocative images has been shown to [negatively affect self-esteem in young children](#), having a harmful impact on body-image and notions of self-worth. Further, alcohol availability and advertising are disproportionately concentrated in [racial and ethnic minority communities](#).

As a business, the State should choose to not contract publicly-maintained property to business that use images depicting provocative behavior that many times will have nothing to do with the product they sell. Comrie's bill would amend the general business law to moderate the advertisement of "content inappropriate to minors" on billboards – including images "advocating or glamorizing the commission of a violent crime, any form of sexually provocative or suggestive behavior, nudity, partial nudity or that which depicts and shows only male or female undergarments."

Senator Comrie was proud to respond to the community's call for improved quality of life: "It's time we acknowledge the message that these images send to our children – that sex, alcohol and violence come without consequence. Instead, we should be encouraging kids to think about their futures. When demand for such advertising space is already high, the State should either opt to conduct business with companies that do not choose to sell themselves using sex or alcohol, or, use the State's advertising budget to promote community improvement initiatives, such as anti-drug campaigns."

Clarence Wittingham, the community member who advocated for this change, was eager for his children to be protected: "In our urban neighborhoods, we need positive images, and our kids need to know that there are other things out there than liquor and sex. It's not good for kids in our neighborhood to have these negative images: they might think that's what life is all about when it isn't."

Grace Wittingham, another community member, added: "Advertising alcohol and provocative images in our community has a degenerative effect and is a destructive force in our community."

"I am pleased to support this important legislation by Senator Comrie. Public property should not be used to condone or encourage unhealthy or risky behavior by minors," said **Assembly Member Scarborough** (D-Jamaica).

Council Member Ruben Wills (D-South Jamaica) said: "The MTA has recently made some highly questionable decisions concerning the advertising content it has allowed to be displayed on its transit vehicles and billboards. It should acknowledge our community's concern that it is lending itself to the promotion of unhealthy and socially

damaging behavior, such as underage drinking and promiscuity. I commend Senator Comrie for his legislative proposal to curb the spread of commercial advertising that is particularly designed to appeal to youths, and promotes a culture of moral decay that we all have been fighting to rid our neighborhoods of.

"I applaud Senator Comrie for the introduction of this legislation to prohibit the advertising of alcoholic drinks and provocative content on state owned property," said **Council Member I. Daneek Miller** (D - St. Albans), who also supported the legislation. "As a community, we have a responsibility to promote positive lifestyle choices within our neighborhoods, and particularly on publicly owned space. With this bill, we can take a step towards fulfilling that responsibility."

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