



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Tony Avella

## Despite Formal Opposition from City, Avella's St. Patrick's Day Bill Passes Senate

TONY AVELLA March 20, 2017

**Queens, NY** – Today, Senator Avella's bill that would establish St. Patrick's Day as a school holiday in New York City passed the New York State Senate. Prior to the vote, the Office of the Mayor sent a memorandum in opposition to state legislators urging them to vote down the legislation.

Avella's legislation—which passed the Senate last March as well, but did not receive a vote in the Assembly—argues that St. Patrick's Day should be established as a school holiday, just as many other cultural and religious holidays, and notes that the Irish community is long overdue for this recognition.

New York State has the largest concentrated Irish population in the United States, 12.9%, and New York City itself was the first to host a Saint Patrick's Day Parade in 1762, which continues to be one of the most widely attended traditions in the city.

A Holy Day of Obligation in Ireland, St. Patrick's Day is not only a cultural holiday to celebrate one's Irish heritage, it is also a way to observe one's Catholic faith. Though not a day of obligation in the United States, Bishops across the country—including New York's Cardinal Dolan—offered Catholics dispensation from their Lenten sacrifices in order to celebrate St. Patrick and the Irish traditions. As signified by Cardinal Dolan and Bishop

Nicholas DiMarzio's granting of dispensation, this holiday is of supreme cultural and religious importance to Irish-Catholics in the State of New York.

"With the passage of my bill establishing St. Patrick's Day as a school holiday in New York City schools, the Senate can proudly celebrate this holiday every year knowing they've done their part in paying tribute to the contributions of the Irish community. It is a shame that the City that invented the St. Patrick's Day celebration refuses to do the same. I urge my colleagues in the Assembly to pass this legislation and send a message to the Mayor that this disregard for cultural and religious celebrations has no place in our state," **said Senator Avella.**

Assembly Member Stacey Pheffer Amato (D- Rockaway) is sponsoring this legislation in the Assembly. The Assembly Member's legislation was referred to the education committee, there is currently no timetable set for a vote.