



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

John A. DeFrancisco

STATE SENATE PASSES BILL THAT WOULD CREATE A NEW GREAT LAKES FLOOD RECOVERY GRANT PROGRAM

JOHN A. DEFRANCISCO May 23, 2017

| ISSUE: **FLOODING**



The New York State Senate today (5/22/17) passed a bill creating a new Great Lakes Flood Recovery Grant Program that would help give needed financial assistance to those affected by this year's record floods in the region. The measure (S6423) makes \$55 million in grants available to property owners, businesses, farms, not-for-profit corporations, municipalities, and counties affected by high water levels in Lake Ontario, Lake Erie, Lake Champlain, and the St. Lawrence River.

The bill is sponsored by Senators Pam Helming (R, Canandaigua), Patty Ritchie (R-C, Heuvelton), Robert Ortt (R-C-I, North Tonawanda), Rich Funke (R-C-I, Fairport), Joseph Robach (R-C-I, Rochester), John DeFrancisco (R-C-I, Syracuse), Chris Jacobs (60th District), Joseph Griffo (R-C-I, Rome), Betty Little (R-C-I, Queensbury), and Tom O'Mara (R-C-I, Big Flats).

A historically wet spring has resulted in serious flood damage along Lake Ontario, Lake Erie, Lake Champlain, the St. Lawrence River, and their tributaries. Property has eroded away, houses have sustained damage, businesses have been disrupted or forced to close, and infrastructure has been broken.

This bill establishes a new grant program to promote economic recovery by allowing state financial resources to flow to small businesses, farms, owners of multiple dwellings, owners of residences, not-for-profit corporations, and municipalities. Modeled after the highly successful program implemented after the statewide flooding from storms Irene and Lee in 2011, the program will help communities rebuild after this latest natural disaster.

The grant program would provide up to \$20 million administered through the state's Empire State Development Corporation to help with physical flood-related damage. Grant recipients could receive up to \$15,500 for owners of residences, \$30,000 for owners of multiple dwellings, \$50,000 for small businesses and farms, and \$100,000 for not-for-profit corporations for damage not covered under insurance or an existing local, state, or federal program.

Municipalities and special districts would be eligible for a total of \$20 million in grants - up to \$1 million each - for infrastructure spending caused by the flooding and high water levels and not already covered under existing funding programs. This could include roads, bridges and other transportation systems, drinking water supply systems, sanitary and/or storm sewer systems, levy and/or flood protection systems, and other municipal equipment. For

other municipal costs that may not be eligible for that funding, an additional \$10 million in grants would be made available by the state.

Counties would be eligible for a total of \$5 million in new grants for flood mitigation or flood control projects costing at least \$250,000, up to \$500,000, and related to the recent Great Lakes water levels.

Senator Helming said, “Over the past month, I have witnessed the devastation caused by flooding in our lakeshore communities. It has been heart wrenching watching property owners trying desperately to save their homes and to see small seasonal businesses that have been around for generations forced to close just before the start of their busy summer season. As someone who has been on-site and working with our first responders, residents, and officials to load sandbags and survey damage, I am proud of the efforts of all of those in our community who have stepped up to meet this challenge head on. Now, with this legislation, we can provide much needed assistance to homeowners, small businesses, and our municipalities. This is a critical first step to rebuilding and restoring our communities.”

Senator Ritchie said, “Over the past few weeks, I have been touring shoreline communities along the St. Lawrence River and Lake Ontario that have been hit hard by this spring’s flooding and have seen firsthand how devastating these rising waters really are. Homes are suffering damage and businesses – many of which are tourism based – are experiencing significant losses during what is supposed to be their busiest time of year. This bill will help communities rebuild and provide much-needed relief.”

Senator Ortt said, “I’ve seen firsthand the devastation the flooding has left behind as it continues to impact residents, close businesses and destroy critical infrastructure along the coastline. These funds would ease the burden for those who have been hit hard by the

historic flooding throughout our region. The grant program will provide the much-needed relief coastal communities need to rebuild.”

Senator Funke said, “With damages to lake and bay shore communities adding-up and no relief from mother nature in sight, we must secure assistance for homeowners, businesses, and municipalities as soon as possible. There are factors involved in the flooding that we simply can’t control, but we can and should help by launching this program to deliver targeted aid to those who are impacted the most.”

Senator Robach said, “All across the lakeshore of the 56th Senate District and along the Northern shore of our state, residents, businesses, and municipalities are struggling with the flooding caused by high water. I am proud to join with my Senate colleagues to support the Great Lakes Flood Recovery Grant Program, which would provide much needed fiscal assistance to those affected by the flooding along our state’s Northern waterways during this ongoing high-water situation. The residents we represent are looking to the state for help and I am glad the Senate is answering their call.”

Senator DeFrancisco said, “The amount of rain that we’ve experienced in our area is unprecedented, as is the damage that the resulting flooding has caused. In emergencies, the state government has an obligation to provide relief for its residents.”

Senator Jacobs said, “The unprecedented erosion from this historically wet spring season has put thousands of New York residents and their homes at great risk. Significant damage has been done to municipal infrastructure and individual residences. The strain on the economy demands that we come to the aid of these communities and the sooner we do so the better.”

Senator Griffo said, “Devastating natural disasters like the flooding the North Country

experienced this spring can wreak havoc for anyone in its path, from businesses and farms to property owners and municipalities. The unanticipated costs of this widespread damage can leave many people struggling to recover, so I am hopeful that the Flood Recovery Grant Program the State Senate has proposed will be able to provide essential support for the individuals and communities that don't have the resources to repair this destruction on their own."

Senator Little said, "Homeowners, businesses, farmers and others who have sustained flood damage need our help, they deserve the support of their government to recover financially and to mitigate the emotional toll as well. I am pleased to cosponsor this measure with my colleagues in the Senate and am hopeful the Assembly will join our effort."

Senator O'Mara said, "Widespread flooding throughout the Great Lakes region is taking a devastating toll on shoreline communities. This Senate action sets forth what we believe is the fundamental blueprint for the state's response to help homeowners, business owners, farmers, municipalities, and others begin to recover and rebuild."

The bill has been sent to the Assembly.

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