



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Timothy M. Kennedy

## Eight WNY Municipalities Join Kennedy's Push for Ash Borer TREE Tax Credit to Provide Relief for Property Owners

TIMOTHY M. KENNEDY May 25, 2017

| ISSUE: **EMERALD ASH BORER**

*Local Towns and Villages and a New Assembly Sponsor Echo Kennedy's Call; Emerald Ash Borer Tax Credit is Gaining Momentum*

*TREE Credit Provides Tax Credit to Property Owners Who Have to Treat or Remove an Ash Tree Because of Emerald Ash Borer Infestation*

BUFFALO, N.Y. – Senator Tim Kennedy (D-Buffalo) stood today with local leaders to push for passage of his TREE (Tree Removal & Emerald Ash Borer Elimination) Tax Credit, which provides a tax credit for property owners who have to treat or remove an ash tree due to an infestation of the emerald ash borer. The ash borer, an invasive species from Asia, has devastated ash populations across the Great Lakes region, and threatens New York State's 900 million ash trees. For trees that are salvageable, Kennedy's legislation provides a tax credit to alleviate the cost of pesticide treatments to help to stave off fatal damage to the tree, while also providing a credit for the complete removal of fully infested trees. The bill provides a 50% tax credit, capped at \$300 for removal and capped at \$100 for treatment. Kennedy has now secured the support of Assemblyman Steve Englebright (D-East Setauket), who has agreed to introduce the legislation in the State Assembly. Assemblyman Englebright chairs the Assembly's Committee on Environmental Conservation. Since introducing the legislation last year in the State Senate, Kennedy has received resolutions and letters of

support from the following municipalities, representing over 565,000 Western New Yorkers:

- The City of Buffalo
- The Town of Cheektowaga
- The Town of Clarence
- The Town of West Seneca
- The Town of Lancaster
- The Town of Tonawanda
- The Town of Grand Island
- The Village of Williamsville

“Week after week, my office hears from constituents who are forced to shell out hundreds or even thousands of dollars to remove dead ash trees from their property,” said Senator Kennedy. “These dead trees, which have been killed by the invasive emerald ash borer, are extremely dangerous. They can fall and take out power lines, damage property, and even kill or injure people – they are a hazard and must come down. The supervisors and mayors who have supported this legislation understand that, and I am pleased that this legislation has now earned the support of Assemblyman Steve Englebright.”

“Dead and diseased ash trees pose a serious risk to life and property as a result of the damage done by the Emerald Ash Borer,” said Cheektowaga Supervisor Diane Benczkowski.

“Cheektowaga has been hit hard by this infestation and the Town has already taken steps to remove diseased and dead ash trees from town owned property, but many more are located on private property. Treating or removing ash trees is costly and many of our homeowners cannot afford to address this unexpected burden on their own. I strongly support Senator Kennedy’s TREE Tax Credit and thank him for his efforts to provide relief to Cheektowaga homeowners impacted by this infestation.”

“It is estimated that about 25% of the trees on Grand Island are ash,” said Grand Island Supervisor Nathan McMurray. “The emerald ash borer infestation has been with us now for several years. It is a huge problem as most of the trees are dying. Residents and Town officials must decide between removing trees and treating them. Both are costly ventures. As more and more die they pose a threat to the safety of our streets, properties, and residents.”

“The challenges that municipalities and residents face against the Emerald Ash Borer include the financial cost of removing diseased trees as well as the public safety concern of dead and dying Ash Trees,” said West Seneca Supervisor Sheila Meegan. “On behalf of the Town of West Seneca, we are in full support of Senator Kennedy’s legislation to provide relief to not only remove affected trees, but also plant new ones to re-tree our community. The ecological impact of re-tree is vital to our tree management practice.”

“Residents in the Town of Lancaster, including the Villages of Depew and Lancaster, have been forced to remove Ash trees that have been killed by the Emerald Ash Borer at a great personal expense,” said Town of Lancaster Supervisor Johanna Coleman. “Any relief that can be given to the residents in the form of tax credits for the treatment or removal of the affected trees will have a positive result in attacking this problem.”

“In the last two years alone our Highway Department has received hundreds of calls from residents affected by the spread of the Emerald Ash Borer, resulting in the removal of over 230 trees,” said Town of Tonawanda Supervisor Joseph H. Emminger. “The proposed legislation of the Tree Tax Credit will go a long way to assist the Town and its homeowners with the costs involved in combating the epidemic the Emerald Ash Borer created.”

“On behalf of the Village of Williamsville, I would like to thank State Senator Tim Kennedy for proactively addressing the emerald ash borer,” said Williamsville Mayor Brian Kulpa. This invasive beetle has killed hundreds of trees in the Village alone, and doesn’t respect

municipal borders or property lines. The Village is thankful for the Senator's leadership in providing a better response to the damage of the ash borer for Western New Yorkers."

"The Buffalo Olmsted Parks Conservancy applauds the vital efforts of Senator Kennedy to assist in the fight against Emerald Ash Borer," said Stephanie Crockatt, Executive Director of the Buffalo Olmsted Parks Conservancy. "The Conservancy appreciates the State's funding assistance as we have been entrenched with this urban forestry crisis for over four years in trying to treat, clear and protect hundreds of Ash trees. As the Senator and many realize, this infestation battle is bigger than mere parks and recreation, this impacts the healthy green quality of life we all share in Western New York."

The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation estimates that there are 900 million ash trees in New York State. Additionally, roughly 20% of trees in Erie County are ash. To help slow the spread of the infestation, New York State has implemented a quarantine on ash from affected areas of the state, including Western New York. According to the DEC, ash firewood and logs are the largest cause of further spread of the ash borer.

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#### RELATED LEGISLATION

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### 2017-S1806

- 
- Introduced

- ◦ In Committee Assembly
  - In Committee Senate
- ◦ On Floor Calendar Assembly
  - On Floor Calendar Senate
- ◦ Passed Assembly
  - Passed Senate
- Delivered to Governor
- Signed By Governor
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Relates to establishing a tree removal and emerald ash elimination credit

January 11, 2017

In Senate Committee Investigations and Government Operations

Sponsored by Timothy M. Kennedy

Do you support this bill?