



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Joseph A. Griffo

Sen. Griffo, Assemblyman Walczyk introduce legislation altering makeup of Senate

JOSEPH A. GRIFFO February 27, 2019

ALBANY – State Sen. Joseph Griffo, R-I-C-Rome, and state Assemblyman Mark Walczyk, R-C-I-Ref-Watertown, announced today that they have introduced legislation (S2047) that will provide for more geographic balance to the New York State Senate.

Since New York City and its immediate surroundings contain such a disproportionate amount of New York State's population, the unintended consequence of the "One Person-One Vote" 1964 Supreme Court decision of *Lucas v. Colorado General Assembly* has been to effectively disempower virtually any state resident outside of the immediate vicinity of New York City.

While there have been a number of ideas and perspectives raised about addressing parity throughout the state, the objective should be on finding balance. The legislation introduced by Sen. Griffo and Assemblyman Walczyk would address this by amending the state Constitution and awarding each county in the state a single senator to represent it in the Legislature. As a result, the number of Senate districts would decrease from 63 districts to 62 while representation in the state Assembly would continue to be population based.

If the legislation is passed by the Assembly and Senate and signed into law, New York State's government would more closely mirror the setup of the federal government where

congressional districts are determined by population, but each state has two senators. This allows all 50 states in the Union to have an equal voice regardless of the size of their population.

“Many in Upstate New York, and rightfully so, are concerned that their voices won’t be heard now that all levels of state government are controlled by those with Downstate and New York City Interests,” Sen. Griffo said. “As such, we must continue to seek out balance between all regions of our state to ensure that all voices are being heard and that all needs are being met. Our legislation would help us to do that by creating a more equitable distribution of legislative representatives, leading to a better and less parochial government for all New Yorkers. Legislators like Assemblyman Walczyk understand how important it is to find balance, and it is a pleasure to partner with him on this effort to provide Upstate New York with more of a voice when it comes to decisions affecting the entire state.”

"The citizens of upstate New York are frustrated, rightly so, with the power that political bosses out of New York City have in our state government," said Assemblyman Walczyk. "Not since Tammany Hall has a threat to the future of the balance in our representative democracy been so apparent and so it's time to propose a remedy. Just like our Federal government sought a system that would give each state a guaranteed two seats in the United States Senate chamber, we're seeking a voice that will make sure each county of New York has a seat in our state Senate. While I'm proud to represent the Front Yard of America in the New York Assembly, I'm prouder still to partner with like-minded good-government legislators, like Senator Joe Griffo, to propose common sense reforms that will make New York's government work for all New Yorkers. Our plan is to push hard to garner support for this important reform in a nonpartisan way and see it to fruition."

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