



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Joseph A. Griffo

Griffo votes in opposition to Farmworkers Fair Labor Practices Act

JOSEPH A. GRIFFO June 20, 2019



ALBANY – New York State Senate Deputy Minority Leader Joseph Griffo, R-I-C-Rome, voted against the Farmworkers Fair Labor Practices Act (S6578), which was passed by the Senate and Assembly and is expected to be signed into law by the Governor.

“While I recognize and respect the important role that farmworkers play in the state’s agriculture industry, I could not support this legislation,” Deputy Minority Leader Griffo said. “I believe that it could have a detrimental effect on the viability and financial well-being of family farms at a time when many are already struggling.”

A Farm Credit East analysis found that this legislation would increase the labor costs of farms by an estimated \$300 million, or more than 17 percent what they are now.

Deputy Minority Leader Griffo was critical of a three-member wage board that will be created as part of the legislation. The board, which will study overtime pay for farmworkers, will consist of representatives from the New York Farm Bureau and the AFL-CIO and a member who is selected by the state Department of Labor.

“This board is made up of nonelected appointees that will be given the power to unilaterally change the provisions of this law,” Deputy Minority Leader Griffo said. “I worry that this could cause significant financial hardships for farms because these board members will have the authority to decide what the maximum amount of hours is before farmworkers are paid overtime. Wage boards should not be determining these types of policies. The Legislature should.”

Farmers and groups such as the New York Farm Bureau, Unshackle Upstate, the New York State Vegetable Growers Association, the New York Apple Association, the Northeast Dairy Producers Association, the New York State Horticultural Society, the New York Thoroughbred Breeders Association, Inc. and Grow NY Farms, a coalition of more than 50 New York-based farms, local businesses and organizations, also have expressed concerns with how the legislation would affect the state’s agricultural industry and farmworkers.

“In Upstate New York, farming and agriculture is a way of life for many families and the backbone of our economy,” Deputy Minority Leader Griffo said. “In the three counties I represent, there are 2,845 farms. Unfortunately, this bill, sponsored by a downstate Senator from a district with no farms that will be impacted by this legislation, displays a fundamental lack of knowledge of how farms operate, as well as the problems rural communities face every day.”

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