



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Joseph A. Griffo

Griffo statement on end of legislative session

JOSEPH A. GRIFFO June 24, 2019



ALBANY – New York State Senate Deputy Minority Leader Joseph Griffo, R-I-C-Rome, released the following statement today regarding the end of the 2019 Legislative Session:

“While this year’s session tackled a number of social issues, it failed to address what I believe are the real problems facing our state – crushing taxes, burdensome mandates and regulations and high energy costs.

Our residents are already overtaxed, with New York having the dubious honor of having the

highest combined state and local income taxes in the nation. Just as working families across New York restrict spending and make wise choices with their hard-earned paychecks, our state needs to rein in spending without resorting to new tax and fee increases.

However, even though New York ranks first in the nation for residents moving out of state and 40 percent of current New Yorkers believe they can no longer afford to live here, downstate Democrats are picking up right where they left off in 2010 when they raised taxes 124 times totaling \$14 billion. They passed a budget this year that increased taxes by over \$1 billion this year and potentially \$4.5 billion next year while also placing costly new mandates on counties and local governments for initiatives such as early voting.

Unfortunately, they weren't done.

The reforms that downstate Democrats enacted will eliminate cash bail for everything shy of the most severe violent felonies and lets up to 90 percent of individuals arrested for a crime walk free. Other bills they passed will provide illegal immigrants with driver's licenses and free college tuition and will have strong negative implications for our family farms that are already struggling to stay afloat. As a result of some of their initiatives, residents could see higher energy costs.

Rather than leading, Democrats in the Senate and Assembly created dozens of different task forces, panels and commissions this year. In fact, one task force that will study high property taxes will not report back for a full 3 years, even though we all know taxpayers need relief now.

In short, downstate Democrats put the needs of criminals and illegal immigrants over those

of the state's hardworking small business owners, farmers, crime victims, workers, students and middle-class families and imposed New York City-centric policies on Upstate New York.

In comparison, my 2019 agenda featured a Victims' Justice Agenda that protects victims, families and communities; an economic agenda that stops the exodus of jobs and businesses from New York; cuts to energy, property, business and income taxes; real mandate relief and regulatory reform; and statewide broadband access.

My Senate Republican colleagues and I also offered a series of amendments that would have charted a far different and better course. Many of them come from our 'Real Solutions' budget plan, which provided a blueprint for a more fiscally responsible state government that protects taxpayers and creates new jobs. Our plan includes accelerating the middle-class tax cuts to provide more relief this year, making the property tax rebate checks permanent and enacting a state spending cap into law so Albany can never again spend more than taxpayers can afford. It also would ensure parity so that every region of the state is treated fairly when it comes to the allocation of transportation funds and other resources.

There were number of issues that came up for discussion, debate and deliberation during this year's legislative session. While it is difficult to discern many statewide successes, we strengthened and toughened sexual harassment laws, decoupled teacher evaluations from student test scores, allocated additional funding to clean water infrastructure and supported the Equal Rights Amendment that expands protections under New York State's constitution for women, LGBTQ individuals, the elderly and New Yorkers living with a disability. We also focused on nuisance issues such as fraudulent telemarketing and robocalls.

This year's session also provided us with the opportunity to address a number of important

local issues. I successfully passed legislation that will help our communities, including a bill that provides local governments with the opportunity to apply for flood mitigation and economic development funding and a measure that saves towns money by authorizing them to designate certain town roads as low-volume and minimum maintenance roads. With help from my colleagues, we successfully restored \$65 million in funding for the Extreme Wintery Recovery Program for important road repairs and redirected \$20 million in aid to local libraries.

I also was proud to have stood up for our military and New York's Gold Star families to ensure that they are provided with free college; advocated for mandate relief for residents, local governments and school districts; voiced concerns regarding a number of downstate-driven initiatives and proposals that will have a devastating effect on other regions of New York State; and to have fought for parity between downstate and upstate when it comes to infrastructure investments.

New Yorkers, especially those upstate, are starting to realize the hazards, perils and dangers of one-party, one region rule. Without checks and balances and real accountability, bad policies such as the one's we've seen this legislative session get enacted into law. I will continue to advocate and fight to ensure that the voices, concerns and needs of Upstate New York are met and that all regions of the state are treated equally and fairly."

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