



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

James L. Seward

## Mohawk Valley Nine Flood Roundtable

JEFF BISHOP, COMMUNICATIONS DIRECTOR January 7, 2020

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**UTICA, 01/07/20** – The Mohawk Valley Nine, a bipartisan coalition of state legislators representing Herkimer, Madison and Oneida counties, today hosted a roundtable with area elected officials, emergency officials, and state agency representatives to discuss the October 2019 flooding event.

Along with considering potential legislation, funding, and policy changes to assist flood ravaged communities, the legislators also signed a letter to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) appealing the recent decision to deny individual assistance to

homeowners affected by the flood event.

Senator James L. Seward, delegation co-chair, said, **“By bringing local officials together to discuss their concerns with flood response we now have some concrete ideas to pursue as the 2020 legislative session begins. Cutting red tape, responding quickly to local needs, and ensuring that our local officials know how to access state assistance are just some of the concerns that the Mohawk Valley Nine will be addressing. We also need to assure that home and business owners who have lost so much are made whole and I am hopeful that FEMA will step up and do the right thing.”**

Assemblywoman Marianne Buttenschon, delegation co-chair, said, *“The goal of today’s Mohawk Valley Nine roundtable was to identify the ways that we can improve responses to disasters and contribute to preventive measures that curtail the type of devastation caused by the Halloween 2019 storm and floods. This meeting gave my fellow Mohawk Valley Nine members and I the opportunity to continue our ongoing conversation with local officials to discuss how we can better serve the residents of the Mohawk Valley and help our brave emergency responders do their jobs. The safety of our families is my top priority, and I’ll continue working hard to improve the response and recovery efforts in our region. It’s absolutely unacceptable that FEMA has refused to give Mohawk Valley residents the help they need to rebuild their lives. I urge FEMA to immediately step up following the devastation that our region has faced.*

Senator Joseph Griffo, deputy minority leader, said, *“Today’s meeting provided us with the opportunity to bring together a variety of stakeholders to discuss flooding concerns shared by many throughout the region. As we move forward, we will continue to work to address this issue and to help the residents and business owners who have suffered as a result of these severe weather events.”*

Senator Rachel May said, *“Today I had the opportunity to meet with local leaders and families who were impacted by the devastating flooding that took place on Halloween. I thank my colleagues for taking time to sit down, discuss potential solutions, and advocate*

for better relief options for those facing damages, including relief to individuals from FEMA.

Senator Jim Tedisco said, ““Today, I’m joining with my fellow members of the Mohawk Valley Nine bi-partisan legislative delegation to urge FEMA to do the right thing and appeal for approval for the Individual Assistance program for 49th Senate District and all Upstate homeowners from the 13 counties who were devastated by the Halloween storm. These taxpayers should have the same access to help as other natural disaster victims in other parts of the country. FEMA needs to do right by our constituents!”

Assemblyman Ken Blankenbush said, “I was happy to have attended the Mohawk Valley Nine meeting where many elected officials came together to discuss regional concerns that we experience, specifically the devastating impact that recent flooding has caused in our districts. I look forward to continuing to work with the coalition to ensure our regions are protected and provided assistance when floods wreck homes and businesses.”

Assemblyman Brian Miller said, “Our region is no stranger to flooding. This past fall, we once again, suffered flooding issues and, once again, FEMA denied aid to our residents. As a group of legislators dedicated to working together for our region, we are working to secure assistance. We will also work on potential legislation and funding this year to help flood mitigation efforts for the future. This legislative caucus is here to be of service to the Mohawk Valley.”

Assemblyman John Salka said, “It was a productive meeting, I appreciate hearing the concerns of those affected. The most important part now is the follow up. We need to address this devastation through legislation, and improve the process of protecting people’s homes and the safety of their families.”

Assemblyman Robert Smullen said, “I am pleased to have taken part in this important meeting with my legislative colleagues on both sides of the aisle to address this critical issue for our state. Since the Halloween flooding, I have been adamant about the need for FEMA and New York State to provide funding to help rebuild our impacted communities. Although FEMA’s decision not to provide aid directly to homeowners is a setback, I am hopeful that the state will appeal this decision and that this will be decided favorably for homeowners. Until then, my support for homeowners and continued funding to our communities will be unwavering.”

Styled in the fashion of other regional caucuses, the Mohawk Valley Nine was formed in 2017 to address issues of concern within their overlapping districts.

The Mohawk Valley Nine is comprised of delegation co-chairs Senator James L. Seward (R/C/I – Oneonta) and Assemblywoman Marianne Buttenschon (D/I - Utica), Senator Joseph A. Griffo (R/C/I – Rome), Senator Rachel May (D – Syracuse), Senator Jim Tedisco (R/C/I/Ref – Glenville), Assemblyman Ken Blankenbush (R/C/I – Black River), Assemblyman Brian Miller (R/I – New Hartford), Assemblyman John Salka (R/C-Brookfield), Assemblyman Robert Smullen (R/C-Meco).