



NEW YORK STATE LEGISLATURE

*Office of Senator
Pam Helming*

*Office of Assemblyman
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Senator Helming, Assemblyman Finch Deliver \$500,000 to Protect Village of Aurora from Harmful Algal Blooms

GENEVA – Senator Pam Helming and Assemblyman Gary Finch today announced that they have secured \$500,000 to purchase a new water filtration system for the Village of Aurora/Wells College water plant. Currently, the outdated system cannot filter out harmful algal blooms (HABs).

“The families and businesses of Aurora deserve to know that when they turn on the tap, their water is safe for drinking and bathing. That is why we worked hard over the past year and a half to make this project a reality. Over several meetings with Mayor Bennett and President Gibraltar, we reached a solution that will allow the College to make much-needed infrastructure improvements in order to update the water system and keep harmful bacteria out of the water. This funding will ensure that the residents and businesses of Aurora will have a safe, reliable water supply to meet all of their needs. I enjoyed working with the College and the Village, and I wish them both much success on this project,” Senator Helming said.

Assemblyman Finch said, “This is a wise investment in public health and public safety. When Senator Helming and I say that combating harmful algal blooms is critically important, we mean it, we take action, and we deliver real results. This is about protecting families and seniors. This is about showing our small business community that we’ll prioritize the infrastructure improvements they need to grow and thrive. It underscores the need to confront environmental challenges head on and devote state resources to sound stewardship of the Finger Lakes, our most treasured resource. This is a victory for the people of Aurora and for Wells College. I want to thank Mayor Bennett and President Gibraltar for their willingness to work together and put our community first. I want to thank Senator Helming for her clear vision, tireless efforts, and outstanding leadership.”

Aurora Village Mayor Bonnie Bennett said, “The Village is very grateful to Senator Helming and Assemblyman Finch, not only for recognizing the seriousness of the threat to our water supply but also for understanding that the cost of the solution would be overwhelming for our small community. We have been working with state and local officials and agencies for eight or nine months now, and I have been heartened by their interest, suggestions, and advice, but thanks to the concern and persistence of Senator Helming and Assemblyman Finch, I’ll be sleeping better at night.”

Wells College President Jonathan Gibraltar said, “I cannot begin to find the words to thank Senator Helming and Assemblyman Finch for their support in making this a reality. We all came together – Wells College, the Village of Aurora, and our magnificent elected officials – to prevent a potential public health crisis in Aurora. We told them of the problem, they listened, and they made our need known. We are so grateful for their support and that New York State supports its communities in times such as this.”

The College has owned and operated its water filtration plant since the 1920s and has supplied the Village with water throughout that time. Because of the high cost of making repairs to the aging system, the College has been working with the Village on a solution that benefits both entities and creates a sustainable long-term plan.

However, the immediate concern is ensuring that if there is another HABs event local residents will be protected. Last year, Senator Helming secured \$125,000 to help the College and Village purchase an activated carbon filtering system. Both grants are now with the State Department of Budget and the Dormitory Authority of the State of New York.

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From left to right: Assemblyman Gary Finch, Aurora Village Mayor Bonnie Bennett, Wells College President Jonathan Gibraltar, Senator Pam Helming, and Aurora Village Attorney Tom Blair.