



# NEWS

## August 2020

# From Bill Magnarelli

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## Moving Ahead in Uncertain Times

Usually, the New York State Fair is the highlight of this time of year. While we continue to deal with the Covid-19 pandemic and resulting uncertainties and cancellations, we are missing many events that we rely on as traditional starts to the early fall and school year. Even through this difficult time, my office staff and I are attempting to provide for our communities' needs and we continue to work with all organizations that serve them.

In preparation for the upcoming election, absentee/mail-in ballots can be requested at

[www.ongov.net/elections/absentee.html](http://www.ongov.net/elections/absentee.html) to request a ballot in Onondaga County or call (315) 435-8683. Also on the site, there is information about early voting times and locations.

As always, if you have any questions or concerns about these or any other state issues, please call my office at (315) 428-9651.

### New laws designed to make it easier for New Yorkers to cast their ballots in November are **now in effect**

- ✓ Allows voters to request absentee ballots due to the risk of illness, including COVID-19
- ✓ Authorizes New Yorkers to begin requesting absentee ballots
- ✓ Ensures ballots without a postmark received on Nov. 4 are counted



*William B. Magnarelli*

## Fowler's Fields

The fields at Public Service Leadership Academy at Fowler High School are finished. For 10 years, students didn't have home fields – the last time Fowler played a football game at home was in 2009.

The \$20 million sports stadium complex includes multi-purpose turf fields for football, soccer and lacrosse, an eight-lane track, press box, concession stand, tennis courts and practice field. Funding for the project comes in part from the \$525 million that Assemblyman Magnarelli secured for major renovations at the Syracuse City Schools, through the Joint School Construction Board Legislation he sponsored in the Legislature. This project completed the sports complex renovations the Assemblyman has advocated for over the years at Heninger, Corcoran, Nottingham and Fowler High Schools.



Chris Gray, Project Manager from Turner Construction, Assemblyman Magnarelli and Syracuse City Schools District Superintendent Jaime Alicea took a tour of the new athletic complex at the Public Service Leadership Academy at Fowler High School.

## Closer to Finishing Loop the Lake Trail at Onondaga Lake

Assemblyman Magnarelli took a tour of the newly unveiled stretch of the Loop the Lake Trail at Onondaga Lake. He has secured more than \$1 million to help the county create a trail that completely links the perimeter of the lake. Creating the Loop the Lake trail allows people to spend more time outdoors, enjoying the natural beauty of Onondaga Lake. During the pandemic and quarantine, people used the local parks and walkways to spend time outside, while also social distancing. Walkers, runners and bicyclists already use the 1.1-mile extension that now connects Onondaga Lake Park and Willow Bay, around the west shoreline, to the Amphitheater to the Honeywell Visitor Center along I-690 almost to Syracuse. Work is underway to build a bridge that will result in the trail being elevated near the south end of Onondaga Lake to go over CSX railroad tracks. This section will connect the existing trail with the City of Syracuse's Creekwalk near Destiny USA.

County Executive Ryan McMahon and Assemblyman Magnarelli announced the newly unveiled stretch of the Loop the Lake Trail at Onondaga Lake.




Marty Voss, Commissioner of the County DOT, explains to Assemblyman Magnarelli how the next section of the Loop the Lake trail will include an elevated section over the CSX tracks.

## Speaking Out to Protect the United States Post Office




Assemblyman Magnarelli joined Assemblyman Al Stirpe, Senator Rachel May, President of American Postal Workers Union Local 257 Nicole Burnet and president of the Syracuse Chapter of the National Association of Letter Carriers Tom Dlugolenski denouncing the cuts and dismantling of the United States Post Office.

Assemblyman Magnarelli stood with his Democratic colleagues and several union administrators to denounce President Trump's administration's trying to dismantle the United States Post office. The federal government removed sorting machines and cut employee hours in an attempt to decrease the efficiency and reliability of the post office, without the consent of Congress. The attempted dismantling of the post office comes weeks before the election, when due to the pandemic, a large number of residents are expected to select mail-in or absentee voting. The union representatives stated that under normal circumstances, the United States Post Office handles 1.3 billion Christmas cards, and expressed confidence at handling the estimated 150 million ballots. The long standing safeguards by the board of election show an extremely low voter fraud rate (only 0.004% based on a 2018 study). Residents and small businesses throughout the country rely on the post office to deliver communications, paychecks, bills, supplies and medicine. The actions attempted by the Federal government were simply unconscionable.





### CNY Veterans Parade and Expo

CANCELLED DUE TO PANDEMIC



Due to the Coronavirus, the 2020 CNY Veterans Parade and Expo on Nov. 7, 2020 will be a virtual Event. While continuing to protect our community from the spread of COVID-19, the Central New York Parade and Expo will endeavor to honor and thank our troops with online features. Keep watch for updates. Save the Date for next year's event November 6, 2021.

www.cnyveteransparade.org

Together we can Thank Our Troops!

## Governor Signs Legislation to Facilitate the Use of Electronic Signatures on Tax Returns

Governor Cuomo signed legislation Assemblyman Magnarelli sponsored to streamline the use of electronic signatures on New York State tax returns. The bill authorizes tax preparers to use an electronic signature when filing their client's return online. This change aligns New York with federal rules on electronic signatures and will allow for the more efficient filing of returns. Under current law, tax preparers must still get a physical "wet" signature from their client before filing their State return online.

"As more New Yorkers choose to file their taxes electronically, this bill will make it easier for tax preparers to file their clients' returns in an efficient manner," Assemblyman Magnarelli said. "This change conforms New York's rules on electronic signatures with existing federal policy and will reduce the amount of paperwork tax professionals will need to file a New York State return online. Currently, tax professionals must still collect paperwork from clients with their physical signature to file their State tax return. The bill allows preparers to use a simpler authorization."

The legislation was introduced at the request of tax professionals in New York looking to reduce unnecessary and duplicative New York State paperwork when filing electronic returns for their clients. The new law takes effect immediately.

## Registration as Organ Donors Allowed When Applying for a Hunting, Fishing or Trapping License

Legislation sponsored by Assemblyman Magnarelli was signed by Governor Cuomo to help facilitate organ donation in New York. The bill (A.7915-A, Chapter 149 of 2020) allows people applying for a hunting, fishing or trapping license to register as organ donors. This will further facilitate the registration of organ donors in New York and hopefully save lives.

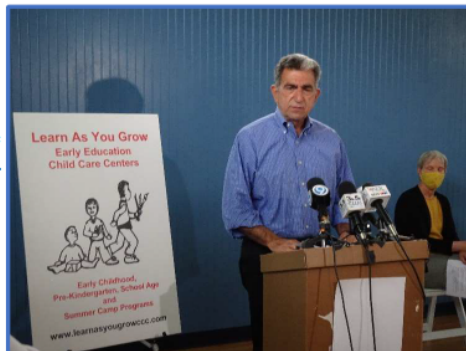
"Unfortunately, New York lags far behind the rest of the country in terms of organ donor registration," said Assemblyman Magnarelli. "Sadly, New York is ranked second to last among the states. I'm hopeful that by allowing people to register when getting hunting, fishing and trapping licenses we can encourage more people to become lifesaving organ donors."

According to Donate Life New York State, the State has nearly 9,700 people on waiting lists for organs and only 39% of the population is registered as donors. There is a tremendous need to register more donors. When "Lauren's Law" was passed to allow registration at DMVs, donor registration in New York increased by approximately 50%. Extending this ability to hunting, fishing, and trapping licenses should help in this effort and increase the registration rate.

The new law will take effect a year from now to provide time to get the new registration system up and running.

## Advocating for Childcare Funding

Assemblyman Magnarelli stood with Assemblyman Al Stirpe and Senator Rachel May, and childcare advocates to call upon the federal government and state government to release more funding for childcare. The conference, part of the "Child Care Day of Action," focused on the need for proper funding of stable, accessible, quality childcare, especially as the region recovers from the on-going pandemic and quarantine.



## Virtual Conference



Assemblyman Magnarelli participated in the Literacy Advocacy Panel with Syracuse University Literacy Masters Students. The discussion centered on helping schools prepare to reach all their students as the pandemic and virtual learning challenges continue.

## Hand Sanitizer Distribution

Assemblyman Magnarelli distributed gallons of the "New York State Clean" hand sanitizer to local organizations which could use the product to help their clientele. "New York State Clean" hand sanitizer is a 75% alcohol hand sanitizer manufactured by the state in light of the pandemic. Below are pictures from local organizations Assemblyman Magnarelli visited:



Solvay VFW



St. Lucy's Food Panty

# Legislation Passes to Stop Abuses of the §485-a Property Tax Exemption Program

Legislation has passed the NYS Legislature to stop abuses of the §485-a Property Tax Exemption Program. Assemblyman Magnarelli sponsored this legislation. Syracuse has seen some of the worst abuses under this program.

To incentivize the redevelopment of older building stock, §485-a of the Real Property Tax Law allowed municipalities to offer a 12-year exemption on property taxes to developers that renovated old commercial buildings to include a mixture of commercial and residential space. However, localities have been granting exemptions to projects that should not receive them under the program. Examples of abuse include: projects with minimal or no commercial uses, buildings that are nearly totally demolished and rebuilt, and projects built on vacant lots. These exemptions are costing participating localities millions of dollars each year and placing a heavier burden on other property taxpayers.

“The abuses under this program are egregious,” Assemblyman Magnarelli said, “§485-a exemptions should not be going to projects where the only commercial uses in the building are vending machines or storage units, or where the developer essentially demolishes the underlying structure for new construction. Local governments and assessors said the law did not give them the authority to deny these applications. This bill gives them that authority. This program was developed to help our downtowns redevelop old buildings into useful mixed-use structures. The new bill passed will return the §485-a program to this purpose.”

This legislation will reform the §485-a program in the following ways:

- Limit the types of commercial purposes and uses that can qualify for the exemption and require them to be publicly accessible.
- Require at least 50% of a building be used for residential purposes and at least 15% of the building be used for commercial purposes exclusive of below-grade floor areas.
- Disallow the exemption on land that was vacant prior to construction.
- Require at least seventy-five percent of the floor area to consist of pre-existing building or structure.
- Require the portion of the building used for commercial purposes to be currently used as such or in good faith contemplated.
- Require an annual certification to the assessor attesting that the property complies with the eligibility requirements.
- Require a revocation of benefits if the property is non-compliant; and impose penalties if a material misstatement is made on an application.

The bill will now go to the Governor for review. It first passed the Assembly in 2019. If it is signed into law, it will return the §485-a program to its original intent and ensure that developers that receive its benefits are truly using it to redevelop buildings for mixed-use to revitalize our downtowns. The bill's effective date is January 1, 2021.

## About New York State Assemblyman William B. Magnarelli

Assemblyman William Magnarelli represents the 129<sup>th</sup> Assembly District, which includes the Northside, Westside, Eastwood Valley and Downtown areas of the City of Syracuse, Syracuse University area, Outer Comstock, as well as the towns of Geddes and Van Buren. He first won election in 1998 for an open Assembly seat and has been reelected since then. During his terms in office, Assemblyman Magnarelli has focused his efforts on bringing more jobs to Central New York, lowering taxes, providing our children a better education at every level, improving our healthcare and keeping our families safe. For more information, contact Assemblyman Magnarelli's District Office at (315) 428-9651 or visit <http://www.assembly.state.ny.us/magnarelli>.