

Honorable James Maisano
Board Minority Leader
Legislator, 11th District



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: April 27, 2011
CONTACT: Legislator Sheila Marcotte 914-961-5780
www.sheilamarcotte.com

Westchester Legislators Propose "Protest Law"

Legislator Sheila Marcotte has been joined by fellow Republican Legislators, John Testa, Jim Maisano, Gordon Burrows and Bernice Spreckman in proposing legislation that would prevent the disruption of funeral services by protesters. The primary purpose of the law which Marcotte submitted on April 9, 2011 is to protect the privacy of grieving families of soldiers, police officers and firefighters who have died in the line of duty. In recent years some small radical groups have exploited the deaths of American servicemen and used their funerals as a backdrop to spew messages of hatred and anti-americanism.

Regardless of how cruel and loathsome the rhetoric of these fringe groups may be, Legislator Marcotte recognizes that their speech is protected under the first amendment. This legislation accommodates the rights of protesters outside a perimeter of 500 feet, up to one hour prior to the start of a funeral or memorial service and one hour after the completion of the service.

According to Legislator Marcotte , "We are all indebted to the service men, and women, of the American Military for defending our freedom everyday, this will allow their grieving friends and family the respect and privacy that they are entitled to during what can be a very difficult time. While

we all respect the recent Supreme Court Decision, this law will prevent demonstrators and protesters from being allowed to

purposefully disrupt and upset these services while being held but will still allow for the expression of free speech prior to and directly after said services if they choose to do so"

Legislator Testa said, "This is a question of common decency and respect for the fallen heroes of our country and their families. This law will protect grieving families from those interested in the political exploitation of their suffering. Families of military personnel killed in action have made the ultimate sacrifice for our country and deserve compassion and respect."

Legislator James Maisano said, "As a Marine and as an American I am profoundly grateful for the freedoms that our men and women in the military risk their lives to protect. I am honored to join Legislator Marcotte in advancing this legislation. Families of fallen soldiers should not have to endure the cruel and combative antics of extremists at the solemn events surrounding the burial of their loved ones. Freedom of speech is a right that is at the heart of our democracy and this legislation thoughtfully protects that right while ensuring the privacy and the opportunity to grieve with dignity for the families of our military heroes."

###