

Mohawk Valley Astronomical Society
P.O. Box 52
Clinton, NY 13323



May 10, 2007

Senator Joseph Griffo
207 Genesee Street
Utica, NY 13502

Dear Senator Griffo:

The Mohawk Valley Astronomical Society (MVAS) urges you to vote in favor of A7438/S4364, "The Healthy, Safe, and Energy Efficient Outdoor Lighting Act".

The MVAS is an organization of amateur astronomers and others who appreciate the night sky, from the Mohawk Valley and other central New York areas. While these bills would help to improve the view of the heavens for our members, the benefits go far beyond that and would apply to every citizen of New York State.

For thousands of years, mankind has been able to enjoy the beauty of a dark night sky. It has only been over the past few decades that poorly directed, inefficient, and inappropriate outdoor lighting has diminished this view. This badly designed lighting has created the sickly-orange glow that now hangs over nearly every community, and has penetrated to all but the most remote areas of our state. Beyond its immediate effect on the sky, this nighttime glow represents an enormous waste of both public and private funds, as well as unnecessary power plant emissions and use of fuel to generate the wasted electric energy. Glare from these lights makes nighttime driving hazardous, especially for our older citizens. Light trespass can deprive property owners of full enjoyment of their personal property, and often prevents a good night's sleep when it shines through bedroom windows. The artificial glow also adversely affects birds and other wildlife.

Without a doubt, the beauty of a dark night sky has inspired untold artists, scientists, philosophers, poets, and others. The benefit to humanity of such views is immeasurable. Sadly, today the Milky Way is now visible to less than half of all Americans due to light pollution.

These bills address the problem of light pollution in a very practical and common-sense manner. They have been crafted so as to minimize financial effects on the state and communities. For example, this legislation would not require the replacement of any existing state or publicly owned luminaire, but rather would require that only "new or replacement" luminaires meet the new requirements. Proper selection of appropriate luminaires should reduce their required energy consumption, saving taxpayer dollars.

The Mohawk Valley Astronomical Society urges you to vote in favor of these bills.

Sincerely,

Carol Higgins, President
Mohawk Valley Astronomical Society

cc: Hon. Carl Marcellino
Hon. Joseph Bruno
Gov. Eliot Spitzer
Hon. Linda B. Rosenthal