

Biography of Commissioner Pete Grannis

Pete Grannis was nominated by Governor Eliot Spitzer to serve as Commissioner of the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) and began his tenure in April 2007. His appointment marks a return to the Department for Mr. Grannis, who began his career in public service at DEC in the early 1970's as a Compliance Counsel.

Mr. Grannis served as a member of the Assembly representing the Upper East Side of Manhattan and Roosevelt Island for more than 30 years. While in the Assembly, Mr. Grannis championed a wide range of environmental issues as a long-time member of its Environmental Conservation Committee, and played a key role in enacting laws addressing acid rain, clean air and water, fluorocarbons and recycling. He fought for the passage of the State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA), the original Bottle Bill and the clean-up and revitalization of brownfields. He has sponsored legislation, now signed into law, requiring heavy duty trucks utilized by state contractors to use the best available technology and low-sulfur diesel, making such equipment virtually emission free.

Early in his career, Mr. Grannis chaired the Assembly's first Subcommittee on Toxic Wastes, sponsored legislation ensuring a worker's right to know about hazardous materials in the workplace, and worked to regulate the transport, storage and disposal of toxic wastes. Mr. Grannis's other environmental interests include preserving open spaces, reducing packaging waste, and preserving the beauty and irreplaceable resources of the Adirondacks. He has also advocated for funding for the complete and timely clean-up of Superfund sites. Mr. Grannis authored the state's rapid transit noise code and has been in the forefront of the fight to force the MTA to convert its polluting bus fleet to clean fuels.

Mr. Grannis is a three-time winner of the Legislator of the Year award from the Environmental Planning Lobby and was accorded similar honors by the Audubon Society, the Environmental Action Coalition and Environmental Advocates. A nationally recognized leader in the fight to curb the health hazards posed by smoking, Mr. Grannis authored New York's historic Clean Indoor Air Act and strengthening amendments to protect all working men and women from exposure to deadly secondhand smoke. His Adolescent Tobacco Use Prevention Act stands as one of the strongest laws in the nation to limit teenagers' access to tobacco. He also wrote the first state law to require tobacco companies to produce a fire-safe cigarette. The first law in the country to address directly how cigarettes are manufactured, this life saving measure banned the sale in New York of any brand not meeting the fire safety standard.

Mr. Grannis's work has been hailed by the American Cancer Society, the American Heart Association, and the New York State Association of County Health Officials. He received the American Lung Association's prestigious Hall of Fame Award in 1996 and the New York State Public Health Association's Herman M. Biggs Memorial Award in 2004.

Mr. Grannis's efforts on behalf of consumers were recognized by the Consumer Federation of America, which presented him with its prestigious Philip Hart Public Service Award—the first state legislator to receive this award—joining a list of distinguished past recipients including Senators Paul Wellstone, Ted Kennedy and former House Speaker Tip O'Neill.

As Chair of the Assembly Insurance Committee from 1992 to 2007, Mr. Grannis championed legislation on behalf of consumers, including New York's precedent-setting Community Rating/Open Enrollment law which revolutionized the way small group and individual health insurance policies are sold in the state. In 2006, Mr. Grannis negotiated a new law requiring hospitals receiving funding under the state's \$850 million Indigent Care Program to provide discounted care to uninsured patients and rein in the abusive billing and collection practices that have come under fire across the country. Mr. Grannis led the fight to strengthen the state Insurance Department's authority to oversee auto insurance premium rates to stop auto insurers from ripping off New Yorkers and developed important measures to ensure the availability of homeowners' insurance in coastal areas.

Prior to his appointment to the Insurance Committee, Mr. Grannis served as Chair of the Assembly Housing Committee for ten years, where he was the leading legislative voice on behalf of tenants' rights and protections. He crafted many of the state's affordable housing programs for homeless, low-, moderate- and middle-income New Yorkers.

Long recognized for his tireless work to reform and improve the operation of government and politics by good government groups including the League of Women Voters, Common Cause and the New York State Public Interest Group, Mr. Grannis sponsored and supported sweeping reforms to bring transparency and efficiency to the state budget process and to state government. Among the many areas he worked on were overhauling the state's ethics laws and limiting the "revolving door" from legislative member or staff to lobbyist—reforms which were included in the first law signed by Governor Spitzer. Mr. Grannis also sponsored legislation to strengthen the state's lax campaign finance laws by providing public financing of elections and banning unlimited "soft money" contributions to political parties' housekeeping accounts.

An avid outdoorsman and fly fisherman, Mr. Grannis lives with his family on the Upper East Side of Manhattan. He was born in Chicago, Illinois, grew up in Michigan, and is a graduate of the Loomis School, Rutgers University and the University of Virginia Law School. Prior to entering the Assembly, Mr. Grannis practiced law in New York City.