

"We'll get the land one way or the other."

Assemblyman John Burzichelli, *Courier-Post* (July 24, 2009)

New Jersey is one of just a handful of states that have done nothing to curb government abuse of eminent domain. Even worse is that government bureaucrats are allowed to confiscate the property of those serving our country in the military – even while they are overseas defending our freedom. Soldiers give us our freedom, we must protect their land.

Can you imagine coming home from Iraq, Afghanistan, or anywhere else in the world where you have been serving our country, to find that your property has been stolen through eminent domain abuse? No American can stand for this and New Jersey cannot stand for it.

State and local officials began proceedings to take 3.7 acres of George & Cyndy Gallenthin's farm while George, a Lt. Colonel in the Army Reserve, was serving his country overseas. Gallenthin took the Gloucester County Improvement Authority to court two years ago and won in a landmark unanimous decision by the New Jersey Supreme Court.

But that hasn't stopped Burzichelli from trying to take his property. Assemblyman John Burzichelli arrogantly brushed aside the ruling by the Supreme Court, and assured reporters, "We'll get the land one way or the other."

A-3559 stops government from taking the property of those serving our country. It is bi-partisan legislation sponsored by Assemblywoman Alison McHose (whose husband has twice served overseas as a member of the New Jersey National Guard), Assemblymen Jack Connors and Gary Chiusano. The land leased to Paulsboro by B.P. using Paulsboro taxpayer money is listed as one of the most toxic superfund sites in the state.

The law simply freezes eminent domain proceedings against the home or property of someone serving overseas until he or she has been released from duty and is available to put up a defense against government taking. Someone dodging bullets in the hills of Afghanistan shouldn't have the added worry of government putting his wife and kids out on the street.

A-3559 was supposed to be heard in committee back in February – then on March 12th. Its hearing was delayed at the request of Burzichelli ally Assembly Speaker Joe Roberts of the Camden County Democrat machine. Burzichelli stops at nothing for political gains, including abusive legal assaults against a soldier/farmer. This behavior is unacceptable and cannot be tolerated.

"We have ground forces engaged in Iraq and President Obama has a troop surge going in Afghanistan. American troops will be in combat zones overseas for a long time to come and they simply shouldn't be treated this way," Assembly candidate Bob Villare said.

"John Burzichelli should recognize that his words make him and the political class in New Jersey sound like bullies. He should apologize to the Gallenthin family. He should assure Speaker Roberts gives A-3559 a hearing in committee for the sake of every New Jerseyan who puts themselves in harm's way to defend our freedoms."

PRESS ADVISORY

Bob Villare will conduct an interview during groundbreaking (taking place despite lack of permits) with Corzine on Tuesday September 22nd at 10:00 a.m. The location is 559 Mantua Avenue at Paulsboro, NJ 08066.