

**Greater Mohawk Valley Land Bank  
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**Greater Mohawk Valley Land Bank News Release**

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**Headings:**

Land bank bill heads to the Governor

NYS Senate acts to save land bank funds

Mohawk, NY- A consortium of land banks in New York State was successful in supporting their NYS senators as they passed a bill sponsored solely by Senator David J. Valesky, (Senate district 53) in the closing hours of the regular legislative session that exempts the real property owned by a land bank from certain sewer charges and other significant fees for services that aren't being used in vacant buildings.

Tolga Morawski, acting Executive Director of the Greater Mohawk Valley Land Bank (GMVLB) said, "Those charges and fees take away from the land banks' capital for accomplishing improvements, rehabs and demolitions of blighted properties."

Katelyn Wright, Executive Director, Greater Syracuse Land Bank, said "In Syracuse alone, this will save the land bank over \$300,000 a year that can now be applied to rehabbing vacant and tax delinquent properties. Every neighborhood wins with this bill."

Karl Gustafson, GMVLB board president, said "We owe a vote of thanks to the Senators representing our regional land bank. It was Senator Joseph A. Griffo, Deputy Senate Majority Whip, (47th Senate District) and Senator George A. Amedore, Jr, (46th Senate District) who worked hard to get Senator Valesky's bill through in the last minutes of this session." The bill, S4346, passed unanimously. "Our Senators made the tight calendar work for us," said Gustafson.

"I was pleased to sponsor this bill and to work with my Senate colleagues to ensure its passage. Exemption from sewer taxes and other fees will result in significant savings for land banks, which can be reinvested into the important work of demolition and rehabilitation projects," Sen. Valesky said.

"The eyesore of abandoned and blighted properties can be a negative drag on our communities, so this measure will ensure that more resources will be available to clean up our neighborhoods," said State Senator Joseph Griffo, R-Rome. "The Greater Mohawk Valley Land Bank plays an important role in enhancing the potential for economic growth in our region by addressing vacant properties, and I was glad to help expedite this measure in the Senate to improve the quality of life in our communities."

Joseph A. Marino, Utica Council member and GMVLB treasurer, said, "With time the regular session running out, S4346 was languishing in the Senate chamber, and without quick action, land banks across the state were going to have to spend their limited funds needlessly. A call to Joe Griffo, Deputy Senate Majority Whip, got the ball rolling, and we quickly had unanimous approval for the bill. Now it's off to Governor Cuomo."

"The savings achieved by this legislation will mean more money available to help remove or repurpose abandoned and blighted properties, leading to stronger, healthier communities for all the residents of the Mohawk Valley. I was glad to be able to assist in getting his bill passed quickly through the Legislature," said Senator George Amedore.

The Greater Mohawk Valley Land Bank (GMVLB) was established in 2016 to address the Mohawk Valley's inventory of tax-foreclosed, vacant properties, and is unique among New York State. No other land bank includes territory with six foreclosing governmental units.

Gustafson said that as a multi-county land bank, GMVLB has the ability to work with many State elected officials. "Our Senators' timely action saved land banks across the state significant dollars that can now be invested directly into managing vacant and tax delinquent properties. Our Senators made a difference that will be seen on the streets of our municipalities."

Morawski said that "comprehensive planning, reevaluating code enforcement's role in combatting decline, job training in property deconstruction and rehabilitation, and creative peacemaking are all in our toolbox. Thanks to our Senators and Senator Valesky, we will better be able to achieve these goals."

The New York Land Bank Association notes that GMVLB "is a distinctly regional grassroots-driven land bank in the State....The area bears all the typical scars of deindustrialization, but also the ravages of multiple historical floods between 2007 and 2013. Serving an area with limited institutional capacity at the regional level, GMVLB anticipates using a broad range of creative tools and interventions to tackle vacancy and abandonment across the region."

GMVLB is made up of foreclosing governmental units (fgus) including the cities of Rome and Utica, Herkimer, Montgomery, Otsego, and Schoharie Counties. The land bank is governed by a nine-member board with representatives from each foreclosing unit and with several functioning standing committees including project review, property distribution, hiring, and accounting/financial.

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