STATE OF NEW YORK

9872

IN SENATE

April 9, 2026

Introduced by Sen. GRIFFO -- read twice and ordered printed, and when printed to be committed to the Committee on Commerce, Economic Development and Small Business

AN ACT to amend the economic development law, in relation to establishing the central New York passport program to promote regional tourism, economic development, and cultural engagement across the central New York region

The People of the State of New York, represented in Senate and Assembly, do enact as follows:

Section 1. The economic development law is amended by adding a new article 5-G to read as follows:

ARTICLE 5-G

CENTRAL NEW YORK PASSPORT PROGRAM

Section 181-j. Short title.
181-k. Legislative findings and intent.
181-l. Establishment of the central New York passport program.

§ 181-j. Short title. This act shall be known and may be cited as the "central New York passport act".

§ 181-k. Legislative findings and intent. The legislature finds that the central New York region--encompassing the cities of Syracuse, Utica, Rome, and Cooperstown, and the surrounding towns and villages along routes 20 and 90--possesses a wealth of cultural, artistic, agricultural, and recreational assets.

Despite the strength of these attractions, including the Boilermaker Road Race, the Glimmerglass Opera Festival, the Theater at Woodshill, local farmers markets, art galleries, museums, music venues, sporting events, and other community programs, the region lacks an integrated mechanism for cross-promotion, coordinated event awareness, and visitor retention.

It is therefore the intent of the legislature to establish a regional initiative to promote the collective economic and cultural interests of central New York municipalities, support local businesses, and enhance tourism through a unified mobile platform--known as the "Central New York Passport".

EXPLANATION--Matter in *italics* (underscored) is new; matter in brackets [-] is old law to be omitted.

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§ 181-l. Establishment of the central New York passport program. 1. The commissioner shall develop and implement a "Central New York passport" promotion program. Within one year of the effective date of this article, the commissioner, in conjunction with Empire State Development and the New York state tourism advisory council, shall develop, operate, and maintain a mobile application and web-based platform to promote tourism in central New York that:

(a) provides a comprehensive calendar of regional events, attractions, and activities in central New York;

(b) integrates timetables, maps, and travel itineraries for visitors to central New York;

(c) enables cross-promotional ticketing deals, discounts, and sponsorships among participating venues, including but not limited to restaurants, farmers markets, local museums, theaters, art galleries, movie theaters, breweries, wineries, sporting events, and music venues;

(d) promotes seasonal festivals and regional tourism corridors along New York state routes twenty and ninety;

(e) allows users to create customized "passports" collecting stamps, digital rewards, or points for visiting participating sites; and

(f) encourages community engagement and local commerce by linking small businesses and nonprofit institutions to regional event traffic.

2. Municipalities and organizations eligible for inclusion in the central New York passport program shall include, but not be limited to, those within: (a) Oneida, Madison, Onondaga, and Otsego counties; (b) the cities and towns of Syracuse, Utica, Rome, Cazenovia, Skaneateles, and Cooperstown; and (c) adjacent villages and townships along the New York state route twenty corridor and the New York state route ninety corridor.

3. The department shall enter into memoranda of understanding with municipal governments, tourism boards, and participating private entities eligible for inclusion in the central New York passport program to ensure equitable representation and promotional access. Participation shall be voluntary, and incentives may be offered through marketing grants or shared advertising revenue.

4. The commissioner may designate a regional advisory board composed of representatives from county tourism offices, arts councils, chambers of commerce, and community organizations.

5. The program shall be eligible for state tourism and economic development grants, and may receive public-private sponsorships and federal matching funds where applicable. The department may contract with technology vendors or local universities for app development, data management, and platform maintenance.

6. The department shall coordinate a regional launch campaign, in partnership with the "I Love NY" brand and participating municipalities, which shall prioritize digital inclusion and ensuring accessibility for both residents and visitors. Promotional materials shall emphasize the central New York passport as a means of discovering local culture, supporting endemic small businesses, and connecting visitors across central New York's arts, agricultural, and recreational sectors.

7. The commissioner shall submit an annual report on the program to the governor and the legislature no later than December thirty-first of each year. Such report shall include, but not be limited to, information on program participation rates, tourism revenue impact, and user engagement.

§ 2. This act shall take effect immediately.