



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

John A. DeFrancisco

STATE SENATE PASSES SERIES OF BILLS TO PROTECT NEW YORK'S COMMUNITY HEROES

JOHN A. DEFRANCISCO March 21, 2018

The New York State Senate has passed several pieces of legislation to increase protections for the state's law enforcement community, firefighters, and other emergency service workers, including the "Community Heroes Protection Act." The measures are in direct response to the numerous incidents of violence directed at New York's first responders, and would increase penalties for assaults or threats to police, increase safety at correctional facilities, and increase benefits for those who became sick from their heroic service during the World Trade Center recovery.

The Community Heroes Protection Act was inspired by those who have lost their lives, were wounded, or targeted specifically because of their profession as community protectors, such as last year's fatal shooting of NYPD Officer Miosotis Familia. The bill (S1114A), sponsored by Senator Fred Akshar (R-C-I, Colesville), would make certain crimes explicitly committed against law enforcement, firefighters, and first responders punishable as hate crimes.

Senator Akshar, a former Broome County Undersheriff, said, "We are living in a time where our nation is divided and crimes against first responders and police officers continue to be pervasive. Thousands of men and women voluntarily put their uniforms on every day to protect and serve our communities in a capacity no other could, even when there are very

few willing to stand up for them. The Community Heroes Protection Act sends a clear message – we will not tolerate targeted attacks on those who protect us and keep us safe. We will not be silent while you are being selfless. We stand with you.”

In addition, the Senate will take action on a variety of bills aimed at safeguarding New York’s law enforcement community, including:

- S1747, sponsored by Senator Martin Golden (R-C-I, Brooklyn), helps protect retired police officers from retaliation by individuals who had been arrested by the officers when they were still on active duty. The bill makes the law consistent with the stronger criminal penalties currently in place to prevent the assault of active duty law enforcement by specifically including retired officers;

Senator Golden, a former New York City Police Officer said, “The state of New York must continue to be there for our first responders and those who have dedicated their lives to protecting us. Today, the State Senate passed two bills that I sponsored that will do just that. We must protect our retired police officers against criminal retaliation and expand sick leave for officers who served at Ground Zero. The passage of this legislation rightly signifies our commitment to their health and safety.”

- S1984, sponsored by Senator Patrick M. Gallivan (R-C-I, Elma), strengthens existing penalties by creating a new crime when a terrorist threat is made against a police officer. A person would be guilty of making a terroristic threat against a police officer when they threaten to commit or cause to be committed a specified offense against a police officer, while also demonstrating intent to intimidate or coerce the public or government actions through murder, assassination, or kidnapping, while also demonstrating.

Senator Gallivan said, “Police officers represent the communities they serve and protect, and those who would target these brave men and women must be held accountable. This legislation will send a clear message that we will not tolerate such attacks and that New York stands by our law enforcement representatives.”

- S2125, sponsored by Senator Patty Ritchie (R-C, Heuvelton), prohibits civilian drone use within 1,000 feet of a correctional facility. The civilian use of unmanned aerial systems, or drones, has increased exponentially in recent years. Though many are used for innocuous reasons, in August 2015, a drone dropped a package containing tobacco, marijuana, and heroin into the Mansfield Correctional Institution in Ohio. By restricting drone use in the immediate vicinity of a correctional facility, this bill would help promote a safer prison environment;

Senator Ritchie said, “Inmates are finding new and more devious ways to find networks both in and out of prison to smuggle dangerous contraband, drugs, cell phones and potentially even guns and other weapons past security. Last summer, officers found a drone in the yard of one of New York’s maximum-security prisons, and federal and state prison officials have reported dozens of similar incidents in other states. We need to keep our prisons secure and safe, both for the brave men and women who stand guard and protect us, as well as to prevent prison violence. This bill gives law enforcement the tools to do just that.”

- S5337, sponsored by Senator Kemp Hannon (R, Nassau), expands the permitted use of TSA body image scanner devices in correctional facilities across the state as part of an effort to reduce a high level of inmate “slashing” violence through the use of smuggled blades. The use of the body scanners has been proven to reduce inmate slashing, but the state Commission of Correction suspended the use of the scanners in jails because the Public Health law limits

use to medical purposes only – something this bill would amend;

Senator Hannon said, “Allowing jails to use body scanners will address the rise in slashing and stabbing that is happening because ceramic blades being smuggled in go undetected through current security measures. Correction officers put their lives on the line every single day to ensure public safety. This legislation not only safeguards officers’ lives, it ensures the safety of thousands of inmates as well. The Senate has passed this measure before, and I hope this year the Assembly will join us in moving this important protection forward.”

· S6898B, sponsored by Senator Golden, expands line of duty sick leave to include every public officer or employee who, on the job, engaged in World Trade Center rescue, recovery, or cleanup activities. The expansion acknowledges that every public employee deserves benefits related to any qualifying World Trade Center illness or condition as a result of putting their lives on the line to help in any way they could following the tragic events of 9/11; and · S1302 increases penalties for criminals who target law enforcement through vehicle vandalism. As a result of serving and protecting communities all across the state, law enforcement personnel are placed in dangerous situations on a daily basis. This bill would protect those who protect communities and serve as a deterrent to those who seek to commit such crimes.

In addition to the bills taken up today, the Senate Republican conference has been a consistent advocate for the law enforcement community throughout the state. In last year’s budget, and in response to the tragic assassinations of NYPD Officers Miosotis Familia, Wenjian Liu, and Rafael Ramos, the Senate secured \$4 million to help retrofit NYPD patrol cars and command vehicles with bulletproof windows and door panels to help save the lives of law enforcement.

The Senate Republican conference has also spoken loudly and clearly in support of stronger penalties for hardened criminals. This includes a recent Senate petition drive that collected thousands of signatures calling on the state Parole Board to deny parole for cop-killer Herman Bell and last week's call for the resignation of Parole Board members who granted the release despite Bell's politically-motivated and premeditated assassinations of two New York City police officers.

The bills will be sent to the State Assembly.