



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Malcolm Smith

Statement By Senator Smith Congratulating Senate Colleagues For Passing Legislation Extending The Tuition Waiver Program For Police Officers At The City University Of New York

MALCOLM A. SMITH June 11, 2008

Smith urges Senate colleagues to consider passing other recommendations outlined in the New York State Tri-Level Legislative Report

"On Sunday, June 8th, I was joined in a press conference by members of the Tri-Level Legislative Task Force to release findings of a report prepared after a series of public hearings that examined police practices, procedures, and their impact on the community. The Task Force was formed in the aftermath of the 2006 fatal shooting of Sean Bell by police, which sparked community outrage and protests. The Task Force report includes recommendations based on public testimony on how to increase community safety and help prevent such incidents from happening in the future.

Today, and only four days after the release of the Tri-Level Legislative Report, our legislative body is beginning to consider legislation relating to individuals sworn to protect us. The State Senate just passed S.6897 (Padavan)/A.10736 (Lentol). The bill extends the tuition waiver program for police officers at the City University of New York (CUNY). This legislation is a valuable tool providing much needed opportunity, relief, and incentive for law enforcement seeking higher education and knowledge.

However, we are One New York and I would submit that we would be better served by bringing Senate Bill 7728 (Padavan)/Assembly 10735 (Lentol) to the floor. That important legislation not only extends the current CUNY program for two years, but adds officers who are enrolled in State University of New York Colleges, and increases the reimbursement of additional courses. Passing this Report-recommended legislation would be a sign that the Senate is willing to facilitate discussion on critical issues intended to achieve meaningful improvement in policing and the criminal justice system.

I congratulate my Senate colleagues from both sides of the aisle for working together by taking today's first-step on law enforcement-related legislation and increasing public confidence in our system of laws. I am optimistic and urge passage of other significant recommendations outlined in the Tri-Level Legislative Report and call upon the Senate to focus deeply on constructive changes in police procedures, training, support, and accountability. The Report recommendations are common sense policy initiatives that will make a difference in the lives of all New Yorkers."