



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Malcolm Smith

Senator Malcolm A. Smith Calls For Quick Action To Secure Colleges After Incident At St. John's University

MALCOLM A. SMITH October 1, 2007

State Senate Democratic Leader Malcolm A. Smith (D-Queens) today called on the State Legislature to act immediately on Senate Democratic recommendations made earlier this year, that would ensure the safety of students, faculty, and staff at colleges across New York State.

"Be it in Blacksburg, Virginia or Queens, New York, we have seen that educational institutions are places where security cannot be taken for granted. I hope that New York State will help the rest of our schools to take decisive action to ensure that we have learned the lessons from April's tragedy at Virginia Tech," Senator Smith said.

The Queens lawmaker asked for action following a September 26 incident at St. John's University, during which a 22-year-old student with a rifle walked on to the campus. St. John's officials sent text messages to more than 2,000 students who signed up for an emergency text service from the school. St. John's officials sent the first text message 16 minutes after the gunman was initially spotted. By the end of the day, the numbers of subscribers to the service had tripled.

Senator Smith noted that State Senator Eric Adams (D- Brooklyn), Ranking Member of the

Senate Homeland Security Committee, and State Senator Toby Ann Stavisky (D- Queens), Chair of the Senate Higher Education Committee called for a meeting with officials of the State University of New York, the City University of New York and the Commission on Independent Colleges and Universities to discuss security proceedings after murders earlier in the year at Virginia Tech.

"My colleagues called for several measures, including the installation of a public address system inside all classrooms and campus dorms, emergency phones for every classroom/lecture hall and every on-campus dorm room and an emergency alert system (also known as a panic button)," Senator Smith said.

Senator Smith credited St. John's officials for acting efficiently in the midst of a dangerous situation.

"St. John's University should stand as a model for how to handle such situations. It is of the utmost importance that we give our public and private colleges all the information they need to institute the same policies and programs," Senator Smith said.