



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

William Larkin

Senate Passes Tougher Penalties For Drivers Who Flee Police

WILLIAM J. LARKIN JR. May 15, 2006

This week, Senator Bill Larkin reports to residents that the New York State Senate has passed the "Craig J. Todeschini Bill" that would make it a felony for a driver to flee police.

The bill is named after 25-year-old New York State Police Trooper Craig J. Todeschini of Geddes, Onondaga County, who was killed in the line of duty on April 23rd. A speeding motorcyclist failed to obey Trooper Todeschini's directive to stop, resulting in a high speed chase and his police vehicle crashing during the pursuit.

"Sixteen states have felony pursuit laws on the books to protect people from dangerous high speed chases," said Senator Larkin. "It's time that New York did the same. Our police officers and troopers put their lives on the line every day. Irresponsible individuals, like the motorcyclist who caused the untimely death of trooper Craig Todeschini, must be punished for their selfish behavior. This bill would protect police officers, motorists and pedestrians by punishing drivers who flee the police."

The bill (S.7858) creates the felony offense of unlawful fleeing a police officer in a motor vehicle when a person, after being directed to stop by a police officer or having stopped at the officer's direction, flees or attempts to flee that police officer by driving at a speed in excess of twenty miles over speed limit or engaging in reckless driving.

Under the provisions of the bill, unlawfully fleeing an officer would be a Class E felony punishable by up to four years in prison; if an officer or another person is injured, the offense would be a Class D felony, punishable by up to seven years in prison; and if an officer or another person is seriously injured or killed, the offense would be a Class C felony, punishable by up to 15 years in prison.

The bill was sent to the Assembly.

According to the National Law Enforcement Memorial Fund, over the past ten years, 688 law enforcement officers have been killed in motor vehicle incidents, almost 100 more than were killed by guns.