



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Michael F. Nozzolio

Governor Paterson Closes Upstate Prisons: We Warned You!

MICHAEL F. NOZZOLIO April 27, 2009

Albany- During the recent debate of the New York State budget, State Senator Mike Nozzolio warned his fellow Senators that they were handing over to Governor David Paterson the authority to close prison facilities without any accountability. Citing those predictions, Senator Nozzolio says Governor Paterson's announcement today closing seven prison facilities in Upstate New York jeopardizes the safety and well being of the State's correctional officers and support staff.

"During the recent budget debate, I warned the 32 members of the Senate Democratic Majority who supported Governor's Paterson's budget that they were giving him unaccountable authority to close our State prison facilities and there would be significant repercussions to Upstate New York," said Senator Nozzolio. "In giving the Governor this unilateral authority, the Democrat-controlled Senate has allowed him to close seven prison facilities - all in Upstate Republican districts- without any legislative review or oversight. This is wrong on every level, it's contrary to the prison closure law, and a slap in the face to our State's correctional officers and personnel."

In casting his vote against the Governor's proposal, Senator Nozzolio, former Chairman of the Senate Crime Victims, Crime and Corrections Committee, stated, "I vote no on this outrageous proposal. While the Democrats on the other side of the aisle are praising the victory of drug dealers, addicts and advocates of drugs, I am mourning the defeat of employee rights in this state, employee rights for those thousands of brave men and women who work in our correctional facilities, who lay their lives on the line each and every day."

Senator Nozzolio, along with members of the New York State Republican Conference, introduced an amendment to the State budget that would have prevented the closure of prison facilities in Upstate New York and kept three minimum security prisons operating. Under the budget agreement announced by Governor Paterson, Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver, and Senate Majority Leader Malcolm Smith, Camp Gabriels in Franklin County, Mt. McGregor in Saratoga County, and Camp Pharsalia in Chenango County will be closed without the required twelve month notice required by law.

"The brave men and women who serve as New York's correctional officers walk one of the toughest beats in law enforcement today," said Senator Nozzolio. "Every day, they leave their families and put their lives on the line to help

keep the most violent felons locked up behind bars where they are not a threat to society. Closing prisons and cutting the financial resources needed to operate our prisons safely and efficiently will lead to even more job losses for Upstate New York and create more dangerous working conditions for our correction officers. The result will be overcrowding and instability in our state prison system."

The Governor, Senator Smith and Speaker Silver are ushering in an era of "crime does pay" by demanding the early release of thousands of dangerous drug offenders back onto the streets. During the most secretive New York State budget process in our State's history, the Democratic majority passed legislation to weaken New York's Rockefeller Drug Laws. This could lead to the release of thousands of drug dealers who were convicted of serious class B drug felonies and who are serving lengthy prison sentences for selling significant quantities of illegal drugs including heroin and cocaine.

"During the budget negotiations, I strongly opposed and voted against the Governor's budget and legislation which amounts to nothing more than a drug dealer protection act that will release over 5,000 felons onto our streets, neighborhoods and schoolyards," said Senator Nozzolio. "The Governor and Senate Democrats are undoing all of our hard-fought reforms which led to a decrease in violent and drug-related crimes in our streets and communities. By closing prisons and releasing these dangerous felons, crime has nowhere to go but up. This is not the right message to send our families and communities."

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