



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Andrea Stewart-Cousins

Legislation to Empower Law Enforcement Against Vehicle Thefts

ANDREA STEWART-COUSINS May 19, 2010

| ISSUE: **CRIME**

On May 18th, Senator Andrea Stewart-Cousins announced passage of legislation (S1899A) to provide law enforcement with new tools to prosecute career car thieves. This bill, introduced by Deputy Majority Leader Jeff Klein (D-Bronx) makes it easier to bring felony auto theft charges against suspects previously convicted of a broader range of vehicle-related crimes, assisting police and prosecutors in their efforts to break up auto theft rings.

Under current law, suspects may only be charged with felony auto theft if they have a prior conviction for auto theft, but convictions for other prior vehicle related crimes do not apply. Car thieves often operate in organized rings that include auto strippers, or “chop shops,” and auto identity theft specialists, who change a vehicle’s unique identification number, making it easier to sell stolen cars to unwitting buyers.

Senator Klein’s legislation will enable prosecutors to bring felony auto theft charges against suspects convicted of a wider range of offenses, including unauthorized use of a vehicle, grand larceny, criminal possession of a vehicle, auto stripping, or illegal possession of a vehicle identification number.

“Approximately 350 auto thefts occur each year in the City of Yonkers,” said Senator Andrea Stewart-Cousins. “Senator Klein’s legislation changes the current approach to address a

broad range criminal offenses and will enable law enforcement to fully prosecute the numerous organized criminal rings involved in auto theft.”

“Repeat car thieves have a serious and costly impact on the quality of life in multiple New York neighborhoods. By making it easier for law enforcement to target and prosecute these career criminals, we can catch repeat offenders faster and prevent future crimes from happening. I urge the Assembly and the Governor to join me in my effort to protect New Yorkers from auto theft,” said State Senator and Deputy Majority Leader Jeffrey D. Klein (D-Bronx/Westchester).