



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

James L. Seward

Seward Backs Brittany's Law

JAMES L. SEWARD May 18, 2011

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ALBANY, 05/17/11 – State Senator James L. Seward (R/C/I-Oneonta) today joined in supporting Brittany’s Law (S.3645C) that would establish a statewide violent felony offender registry by requiring offenders to register with the New York State Department of Criminal Justice Services upon release from prison. The law is intended to increase the safety of all New Yorkers by providing access to the list of convicted violent offenders.

“New Yorkers have the right to know when violent offenders are living next door, interacting with loved ones, and possibly endangering their lives,” said Senator Seward. **“A violent felony offender registry will also provide law enforcement officials with an important crime-fighting tool.”**

Brittany’s Law is named for 12 year-old Brittany Passalacqua, who was murdered in Geneva, N.Y. in 2009 along with her mother Helen Buchel by a violent convicted felon who had been released from prison. The killer, John Edward Brown, was on parole at the time of the murder. He was released from prison after serving 2 ½ years of a three-year sentence for assaulting his infant daughter in 2003.

Passalacqua’s grandmother Dale Driscoll, has been leading the fight to establish a violent felony offender registry in honor of her granddaughter. “Nothing can ever bring Helen or Brittany back, but if this legislation prevents another family from suffering the heartbreak

that we have been through, my daughter and granddaughter will not have died in vain.”

The violent felony offender registry would be similar to the New York State Sex Offender Registry. Offenders would be required to register once released from prison and must re-register annually. Information about the offenders would be compiled in the database. Other states have established a violent felony offender registry, including Montana, Illinois, Indiana, Florida, Kansas, Louisiana, Nevada, and Oklahoma.

“Knowledge is power and the establishment of a violent felony offender registry puts that power into the hands of the public while weakening criminals who look to do harm to innocent individuals. Brittany’s Law will help prevent future tragedies and I am proud to support the measure,” Seward concluded.

A recent study by the University of Wyoming found that individuals under the age of 25 who commit violent crimes have the highest rate of recidivism. The Urban Institute Justice Policy Center based in Washington, DC conducted a study published in 2003 that found nationwide 53% of arrested males and 39% of arrested females are re-incarcerated.

Brittany’s Law was approved in the senate by a vote of bill by a vote of 57-4 and has been sent to the assembly.