



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Jack M. Martins

Senator Martins Co-Sponsors Brittany's Law

JACK M. MARTINS May 18, 2011

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Act Would Create Registry for Violent Felons

The New York State Senate today passed with wide bi-partisan support Brittany's Law (S.3645B), a bill 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.

Sponsored by Senator Joseph Griffo (R-IP-C, Rome) and Senator Mike Nozzolio (R-C, Fayette), 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," she said.

The two Long Island freshman Senators – Senator Jack M. Martins and Senator Lee M. Zeldin – were both co-sponsors of the bill.

"We must do all we can to make our communities safer," said Senator Martins. "If there are violent offenders who prone to repeat offenses, it's important to provide information to our communities. The registry will also provide law enforcement with the tools to track violent offenders. We want to make sure our communities are as safe as possible."

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.

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 percent of arrested males and 39% of arrested females are re-incarcerated.

The bill has been sent to the Assembly.