



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Catharine Young

Senator Young Backs "Protect Our Children Act" Introduced in Wake of Caylee Anthony Tragedy

CATHARINE YOUNG July 27, 2011

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ALBANY – The outrage over the Casey Anthony verdict is having a ripple effect across New York State and lawmakers have responded by introducing legislation that would better protect children from neglect, repeated abuse and murder, according to one of the bill’s sponsors Senator Catharine Young (R,I,C – Olean).

Since the July 5th Florida court decision, Senator Young’s says her office’s inbox has been inundated with emails and letters from frustrated constituents who are advocating for tougher changes to New York’s child protection laws.

“The fact that my office has received over a thousand unsolicited emails from very concerned constituents shows just how much this issue hit a nerve with people, especially parents. Other states are introducing ‘Caylee’s Law’ and residents in my district want me to take action, too,” said Senator Young.

“People don’t want to see what happened to Caylee Anthony happen here in New York, and we need to change our laws to ensure that it doesn’t,” she added.

The two-year old Florida girl was not reported missing by her mother Casey Anthony for 31 days following her disappearance and was found dead months later in a wooded area.

The “Protect Our Children Act” would create new felonies for concealing the death of a child and failing to notify law enforcement when the whereabouts of a young child is unknown for more than 24 hours.

“It is a well-known fact that authorities have the greatest chance of locating a child within the first 24 hours of disappearance. We need to drive the point home that reporting a missing child must take place immediately,” said Senator Young.

“It is the number one responsibility of parents and guardians to watch over and protect their children. It is very disheartening that we need to introduce a bill like this, but we have seen a very sad example of why it’s necessary,” she added.

Senator Young said the “Protect Our Children Act” is one of the most “sweeping changes” to state law aimed to better protect children ever proposed and goes beyond legislation recently introduced in other states that simply address the failure of parents and guardians to report their missing children.

Recognizing that parents and caregivers have a heightened duty of responsibility for children in their care, among the more than two dozen other proposals in this bill is a provision that would create the new crime of aggravated murder of a child under 14 years of age with a sentence of life without parole.

In addition, the new legislation would strengthen an existing law of aggravated abuse of a child which makes it a crime when someone recklessly causes physical injury to a child under the age of 14. Current law applies only to day care providers, but this legislation would expand it to also apply to parents, guardians or a person in a position of trust.

Other elements of the bill would create new felony offenses for obstructing the location of a missing child, create a felony child endangering statute to protect children from especially cruel and sadistic conduct and create a statute to protect children from serious reckless abuse.

Senator Young said provisions to increase penalties for repeat child abusers also have been included.

“Caylee deserved justice and out of this horrific tragedy, a need for change has been made clear on a much wider level. Our current laws do not go far enough to protect children who are particularly vulnerable to abuse by those who should be their first line protectors,” said Senator Young.