



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

'Mark's Law' WINS Key Committee Vote

Patty Ritchie

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Bill Inspired by Killing of Cape Vincent EMT Clears First Legislative Hurdle

State Senator Patty Ritchie's legislation known as "Mark's Law," which would apply the stiffest penalty allowed by law—life imprisonment without the possibility of parole—for the murder of an emergency first responder, was approved by a key Senate committee today, the first step on its path to becoming law. The Codes Committee approved the bill, S.4717A, which was introduced in memory of Mark Davis, the emergency medical technician who was shot to death while responding to a call for help in Cape Vincent in 2009.

The bill amends the Penal Law to include emergency responders, emergency medical technicians, firefighters, volunteer firefighters, ambulance drivers, paramedics, physicians or nurses involved in a first response team as victims of first degree murder.

"Last year, over 1,000 firefighters, first responders and supporters of our volunteer and professional emergency services community signed my petition showing their support for Mark's Law," Senator Ritchie said. "Many of them, like me, wanted to make sure that something good came out of this senseless tragedy."

"That's why we owe it to them to give them every protection the law will allow," Senator Ritchie said. "I want them to know that when they go into danger to help the people of New York State that anyone who would threaten or harm them will know that they will face the toughest penalty allowed by law."

Right now, that penalty is reserved for the murder of police officers, peace officers, uniformed court officers, parole officers, probation officers, employees of the division of youth, and corrections officers. "When Mark Davis was senselessly shot to death while responding to a call for help, many people in the emergency medical service community vowed that his sacrifice would never be forgotten," Senator Ritchie said. "Shortly after I took office, it was pointed out to me that our existing laws do not provide the kind of protection for emergency responders that I believe are necessary. After discussions with Mr. Davis's family, the District Attorney and others in both the criminal justice and the emergency services community, I decided to introduce Mark's Law to try to prevent future tragedies of this kind."

Under current law, the maximum charge the killer of an emergency responder could face is second degree murder, with a sentence of 25 to life in prison.

Senator Ritchie's bill was drafted with the help of Jefferson County District Attorney Cindy Intschert, who prosecuted Mark's killer, and the District Attorneys Association of New York State.

The bill is sponsored in the Assembly by Assemblywoman Addie Russell.