



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Ruth Hassell-Thompson

Senator Hassell-Thompson Co-Sponsors New Domestic Violence Laws

RUTH HASSELL-THOMPSON June 12, 2012

| ISSUE: **DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**

CALLS FOR EVEN MORE REFORM

The Legislature is expected to pass a new package of laws which will make significant changes in New York's Domestic Violence Laws. "While this package is a first step on a long road towards modernizing the law to respond to statistical data and the changing needs of domestic violence victims, we still have a long way to go", said Senator Ruth Hassell-Thompson, one of the bills co-sponsors.

The bill creates a fatality review team to critically study trends and specific domestic violence cases. Based on their studies, the team will help to ensure that best practices are implemented by everyone involved in the criminal justice system. Additionally, the bill establishes new criteria which judges must apply when setting bail and increases prison sentences for repeat offenders of the domestic violence. The bill also prohibits abuser control of dispositional remains and increases confidentiality of insurance information and the victim's address.

"Domestic violence is a disease that reaches from parents to children and this disease can be passed on to the next generation unless the light of understanding and stiffer jail sentences for repeat offenders puts an end to it", said Senator Hassell-Thompson.

On May 30th, Senator Hassell-Thompson and other Democrats in the New York State Senate conducted a public forum on selected domestic violence legislation. Attending the forum was Tamar Kraft-Stolar of the Correctional Association of New York, Kim Dadou and Lady Kathryn, domestic violence survivors and advocates, Dr. Anne Klaeysen, Leader of the New York Society for Ethical Culture, Nyasha Griffith, J.D., MSSW, Coalition for Asian American Children & Families, Sandra Park, Chairperson, Domestic Violence Committee for the New York City Bar Association, Kristin Brown Liley & Cathy Roberts, Director of Policy Advocacy, The Empire Justice Center, Shannon Wong, NYS Coalition Against Domestic Violence, Jennifer Ching, Project Director, Queens County Legal Services, Nancy Goldhill, Project Director, Staten Island Legal

Services, Lisa Hofflich and Denise Murphy McGraw, Chairs, New York State Public Affairs Committee, The Junior League, Hellen Kim, Korean American Family Services, William Gibney, Director of Special Litigation, the Legal Aid Society of New York City, Alicia Borns, Director Domestic Violence Services, Equinox, Inc., Kathy Fletcher, Director of Residential Services, Equinox, Inc., Jonathan Graddess, New York Defenders Association, Ellen Schell & Lisa Frisch, the Legal Project. Moreover, statements, letters or memoranda were sent to Senator Hassell-Thompson by Judge Marcy L. Kahn, Justice of the Supreme Court of the State of New York, the Erie County Coalition Against Family Violence, Anita Martin, Vice President, the Legal Action Center, Penny Pope, Residence Director, Hope's Door, Inc., Sister Mary Nerney, STEPS TO End Family Violence, and Laurel Eisner, Sanctuary for Families.

The Forum was also attended by Democratic Conference Leader, John Sampson, Senator Liz Kruger, Senator Bill Perkins, Senator Kevin Parker, Senator Jose Peralta, Senator Gustavo Rivera, Senator Toby Stavisky, and Senator Tim Kennedy.

Senator Hassell-Thompson urged the Republican Majority Senate to pass a series of bills which included: providing courts the authority to reduce sentences of defendants who are victims themselves of domestic violence, creating educational programs regarding domestic violence in hospitals, prohibiting housing discrimination against survivors, protecting confidentiality of immigration status, suspending firearms licenses upon issuance of orders of protection, creating a commission to study dating violence among teenagers, and providing treatment for veterans regarding military sexual trauma.

Senator Hassell-Thompson also sent a letter to Republican Majority Leader Dean Skelos urging his membership to ratify her resolution urging the New York Congressional Delegation to support the reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act of 1994. Since 1994, this Act provides funds for direct services provided by police departments, district attorneys, victim service organizations and domestic violence across the nation. "Domestic violence is not a local issue" said Hassell-Thompson, "it is a national issue, indeed an international issue that we must continue to address. We need the Republican Party to join us in our efforts to strengthen the American Family by protecting victims of domestic violence and stopping and educating the abuser as to the destructiveness their behavior has on the entire family.

Ruth Hassell-Thompson, is the Chairwoman of the NYS Senate Democratic Conference, Chairwoman of the Conference of NYS Black Senators, Executive Board Member of the NYS State Black Puerto Rican, Hispanic and Asian Legislative Caucus and Chairwoman of the NYS Democratic Task Force on Domestic Violence.