



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

John J. Bonacic

## Senate Passes Senator Bonacic's Bill to Keep Dangerous Criminals Off School Buses

JOHN J. BONACIC March 5, 2013

On Monday, March 4, 2013, the New York State Senate passed legislation to protect children by preventing people who have been convicted of crimes involving children, sexual-based offenses, and drug offenses from being a school bus monitor. The bill (S883), sponsored by Senator John Bonacic (R,C,I-Mount Hope), also updates existing laws to include Leandra's Law convictions in disqualifying a person from being a school bus driver for five years after conviction.

"Nothing matters more than the safety of our children. Everyone who watches their child step onto a school bus for the first time, and everyday thereafter, wants to ensure their children are being cared for by qualified, safe, and competent people," said Senator Bonacic.

Under current law, individuals who are convicted of certain offenses involving children, sexual based offenses, and drug offenses are permanently or temporarily disqualified from being a school bus driver. However, school bus monitors who routinely ride school buses along with children to protect their safety are not subject to the same restrictions as school bus drivers. This legislation would subject school bus monitors to the same restrictions and disciplinary standards as school bus drivers.

Additionally, current law provides that an individual is disqualified from being a school bus driver for the extent of the time their license is suspended, with a minimum of six months, if they are convicted of a DWI violation. However, there is no additional penalty if the person is convicted of Leandra's Law, passed in 2009 following the tragic death of 11-year-old Leandra Rosado when she was killed while riding in a car driven by her friend's intoxicated mother. That law imposes tougher sanctions on individuals who place a child passenger at risk while driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs.

The legislation passed today updates current laws regarding school bus driver eligibility by disqualifying an individual from being a bus driver for five years from the date of the last conviction for a Leandra's Law violation.

The bill will be sent to the Assembly.