



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Kathleen A. Marchione

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Marchione, Tedisco, Jordan: Stop Covert Prison Closure Plan to Protect Public Safety

Lawmakers unveil new transparency bill to protect Wilton's Mt. McGregor and prevent governors from closing state prisons by fiat by requiring legislative vote

Senator Kathleen A. Marchione (R,C-Halfmoon), Assemblyman Jim Tedisco (R,C,I-Glenville) and Assemblyman Tony Jordan (R,C,I-Jackson) today announced new transparency legislation to protect Mt. McGregor state correctional facility in Wilton and three others that are slated for closure by requiring the state legislature to debate and vote on any prison closure plan submitted by the governor.

The public safety bill, which is being drafted, requires the executive to submit any prison closure plan a year in advance to the legislature for ratification or amendment. Mt. McGregor houses about 450 inmates and employees 320 public safety professionals and is scheduled to close in July 2014.

"I strongly oppose the Administration's efforts to close Mt. McGregor, which would be the fifteenth correctional facility targeted for closure since 2011. Trying to balance New York's chronic budget deficits at the expense of public safety – while also hurting our upstate economy – is no bargain. In fact, it's bad public policy and even worse public safety. It's time for a little more check-and-balance in New York's system of checks and balances; our legislation would ensure that the legislative branch is heard and goes on-record before any correctional facility is closed so serious matters of public safety can receive an actual public hearing," said Senator Marchione.

"This prison closure plan is yet another example of covert government in action. Last I checked New York State was still a representative democracy with three branches of government: the executive, legislative and judicial. Any prison closure plan should be brought before the legislature for a full and open public debate and a vote and not crafted in secret and handed down by fiat from the administration," said Tedisco.

"When the Administration announced its plan back in July to try and close Mt. McGregor, I said it was disappointing and demanded an action plan – along with actual follow through – to ensure the public safety professionals working at the facility are protected and the financial needs of the host community were met.

Neither of those things has happened to my satisfaction, which is a disservice to the 320 dedicated public safety professionals who work at Mt. McGregor, as well as the host community of Wilton,” Senator Marchione stated.

“Closing Mt. McGregor may be penny-wise but pound foolish. From a public safety standpoint there are a lot of unanswered questions. I’m concerned that some prisoners will be prematurely paroled and let loose on the community. Meanwhile, the rest may be transferred to other prisons that will lead to double or triple bunking posing a safety risk to our corrections officers as well as other prisoners,” said Tedisco.

“Proper management of our prison system is crucial for ensuring public safety. The decision to close any facilities should be subject to a full public vetting that can only be accomplished through legislative review and ratification. It is crucial that we consider all of the consequences, both short term and long term, and consider other viable alternatives to achieve cost savings, before these decisions are made. This will be accomplished through the legislation being drafted,” said Jordan.

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