



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Joseph A. Griffo

## Griffo, Oneida County Officers & Prosecutors Call for Tougher Penalties for Impersonating a Police Officer

JOSEPH A. GRIFFO December 9, 2014

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UTICA – State Sen. Joseph A. Griffo – with the support of law enforcement and prosecutors in Oneida County – today announced he will sponsor a bill that would stiffen sentences for anyone who commits a crime while impersonating a police officer.

The bill would automatically make crimes up to class B felonies one category higher than the offense would have been if the person was not impersonating a police officer.

For example, a third-degree robbery charge – a Class D felony – would be elevated to a Class C felony, increasing the maximum sentence at conviction from seven years to 15 years in state prison.

“Police officers work in unison with law-abiding individuals to maintain quality of life in our area,” said Griffo. “A criminal can exploit that trust by impersonating an officer, degrading that bond that keeps society functioning well. We’ve seen that increasing the severity of the punishment has worked with the Hate Crimes Act. Now I’m advocating for it to be applied to police officers and peace officers.”

Oneida County District Attorney Scott McNamara added, “This bill would send a clear message to criminals: If you’re thinking about impersonating a police officer to pull off your crimes, we’re going to push for a tougher sentence to keep you off our streets. People need to feel safe – and criminals posing as cops undermines that. It’s my hope the Legislature passes this bill in the upcoming session.”

Sheriff Robert M. Maciol added: “When a person encounters a deputy in Oneida County, I want them to trust that person and respectfully follow all lawful commands. When criminals pretend to be us, people lose confidence in recognizing who is legitimate and who is fake. That can affect safety, impede a timely response to an incident and undermine our ability to do our job. I thank Senator Griffo for recognizing this problem and working to address it.”

Utica City Police Chief Mark Williams added, “People should feel like when a car behind them flashes its red lights, it’s safe to pull over. Criminals who take advantage of victims’ trust in law enforcement deserve to face stiffer penalties. It’s important to send a message that this kind of activity – even in jest – is not appreciated and will not be tolerated. Senator Griffo certainly understands our potential problem and I thank him for doing what he can to nip it in the bud.”

A bill similar to the one Griffo will sponsor has passed the Senate in 2007, 2008, 2011, 2012 and 2013. It has not passed the Assembly any of those times.

The bill would increase penalties for any of the following crimes committed after impersonating an officer: criminal solicitation, criminal facilitation, assault, menacing, reckless endangerment, stalking, criminally negligent homicide, manslaughter, murder, rape, criminal sexual act, sexual abuse, unlawful imprisonment, kidnapping, custodial interference, coercion, criminal trespassing, burglary, criminal mischief, criminal tampering, arson, petit larceny, grand larceny, robbery, misapplication of property, unauthorized use of a vehicle, theft of services, fraudulently obtaining a signature, obstructing governmental administration, obstructing firefighting operations and emergency medical services, defrauding the government, escape, resisting arrest, hindering prosecution, witness tampering, intimidating a victim or witness, juror tampering, criminal contempt, disrupting a funeral, harassment, falsely reporting an incident, unlawful surveillance, criminal possession of a weapon, criminal use of a firearm, unlawfully wearing a body vest, hate

crimes, terrorism, possession of a chemical or biological weapon and conspiracy to commit any of these offenses.