



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Michael F. Nozzolio

Senator Nozzolio Announces State Senate Enacts “Domestic Violence Prevention Act-Brittany’s Law ”

MICHAEL F. NOZZOLIO May 18, 2015

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New York State Senator Mike Nozzolio today announced that the State Senate has taken significant and important action in adopting a tougher stance against violent crime by enacting the “Domestic Violence Prevention Act-Brittany’s Law.” This legislation, Senate Bill 513, sponsored by Senator Nozzolio, will create a publicly accessible registry of convicted violent felons.

“Brittany’s Law represents a major step forward for New Yorkers in the fight against violent crime and domestic abuse crimes. By putting new measures in place to track violent offenders and keep our communities informed of their whereabouts, Brittany’s Law will undoubtedly save lives. As Chairman of the Senate Codes Committee and as the former Chairman of the Crime Victims, Crime and Correction Committee, I am committed to enacting tougher sentencing laws for violent criminals, reinforcing laws to protect women and children from domestic violence, and strengthening the rights of crime victims to prevent future tragedies from occurring,” said Senator Mike Nozzolio.

In November of 2009, 12-year-old Brittany Passalacqua was brutally murdered along with her mother, Helen Buchel, at their home in Geneva. Brittany's law is named to honor their memories, and the memory of countless domestic violence victims across our state and region.

“Shannon Pepper, of Cuba, NY, was a courageous domestic violence survivor who used her personal tragedy to fight for greater protection for others. After her attack, Shannon made the adoption of Brittany’s Law her number one mission. She believed that the victims of domestic violence deserved to know that their abusers would be not only held accountable, but that steps would be in place so their attackers could not hurt someone else

in the future. It is in her memory, and the memory of Brittany Passalacqua and Helen Buchel, that we are gathered here today, and it is with the lives of these young women in mind that the Assembly must take action to prevent their tragic circumstances from befalling anyone else,” said Senator Catharine Young.

"The tragic death of Brittany Passalacqua, assault on Shannon Pepper and the horrific mutilation of Andrew Lesperance of Massena - underscores the need for a registry of violent offenders. We have a responsibility to keep our communities safe. Brittany's Law will bring good out of tragedy, by giving families the information they need to know who is living in their neighborhood. The state's sex offender registry has helped many; we're expecting the same for the violent offender database. I thank Senator Nozzolio for his leadership on this bill, and urge my Assembly colleagues to join us in passing this important piece of legislation,” said Senator Joe Griffo

The New York State Senate has adopted Brittany’s Law every year since 2011, but the New York City-controlled leadership of the State Assembly has repeatedly refused to bring this important legislation to the floor for a vote. Senator Nozzolio has continued his efforts to see the measure enacted into law and has worked with law enforcement officials, crime victims’ advocates and with Dale Driscoll, Brittany Passalacqua's grandmother.

In the case of Brittany and her mother Helen, the perpetrator was John Edward Brown, a violent convicted felon who had been released early from prison after serving only 2 ½ years of his sentence for assaulting his infant daughter in 2003. Brown had only been on parole for a few months before committing the murders.

Since these tragic murders occurred, Senator Nozzolio has worked closely with Brittany's grandmother, Dale Driscoll, to develop legislation to allow the public to have greater access to information about violent offenders and the crimes they have committed. Senator Nozzolio has also worked to establish tougher penalties for violent offenders so they can no longer threaten the lives and safety of innocent people in our communities.

“All we need now for the violent offender registry to become a reality is for the State Assembly to adopt Brittany’s Law. New York State currently requires all convicted sex offenders to register with the State and keeps track of those individuals. It makes no sense that we do not do the same for those who commit violent felony crimes against our citizens. We cannot continue to put innocent New Yorkers at risk,” said Senator Nozzolio.

“Words cannot express the gratitude my family and I have for Senator Nozzolio and his dedication and commitment to seeing " Brittany’s Law,” adopted into law,” said Dale Driscoll. “The murder of my daughter and granddaughter devastated our family. If this legislation prevents another family from suffering the loss we have experienced, then my daughter and granddaughter will not have died in vain. People should have the right to

know if a person is a violent felon and I will continue to do everything I can to push this measure in the State Assembly.”

The Domestic Violence Prevention Act - Brittany’s Law would require all individuals convicted of a violent felony to register with the New York State Department of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS) upon their release from prison. The registry would be accessible to the public, similar to the registry of sex offenders that the State currently has in place. The legislation also establishes annual registration requirements for offenders to allow local law enforcement agencies and the State to monitor the whereabouts of these individuals.

Senator Nozzolio has been an outspoken advocate for criminal justice reform, crime victims' rights and tougher sentencing guidelines for violent criminals and sexual predators. He has fought to end work release and conjugal visit programs for dangerous felons, and helped enact critical legislation including Megan's Law, the Sex Offender Reform Act, the Domestic Violence Prevention and Family Protection Act and Jenna's Law. Senator Nozzolio also sponsored and worked to enact “Jackie’s Law”, which empowers law enforcement to pursue charges and prosecute criminals who use a GPS or electronic tracking device to stalk victims.

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