



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Terrence Murphy

Murphy releases plan to improve State Park safety

TERRENCE P. MURPHY August 28, 2015

| ISSUE: **CRIME, GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS, STATE PARKS, AGENCIES**



YORKTOWN, NY - New York State Senator Terrence Murphy today announced a plan to increase police protection at New York's state parks in response to increased reports of violence and crime during the summer of 2015. Most notably, an incident involving reports of gunshots at FDR State Park in Yorktown on July 19th ignited local community concerns.

"In the weeks since the shooting, my concerns have escalated," Murphy said. "I believe short and long term plans are needed to ensure the safety of park patrons, as well as those charged

with protecting them. It is not reasonable for state officials to promote the parks as an asset while providing in sufficient resources to properly get the job done."

In an effort to learn more about the incident in FDR, as well as further understand the challenges facing law enforcement officials who patrol state parks in New York, Senator Murphy has been in contact with senior officials at New York State Office of Parks and Recreation and Historic Preservation, as well as the Police Benevolent Association of New York State Law Enforcement who represents park police officers across the state. During these discussions, union officials outlined the challenges they face in ensuring the safety of more than 60 million visitors annually to New York's parks.

"Crimes which occur in New York State parks mirror the same crime profiles as many of our urban communities," said Manny Vilar, PBA of NYS President. "There is gang activity, assaults, fights and many other crimes of opportunity. Understaffing has rendered the police force reactionary and puts the public at great risk."

Senator Murphy's multi-point plan is intended to secure accountability and recommends immediate, and near term actions, that will bolster the law-enforcement presence and increase park safety.

The plan includes:

- Requesting the authorization, allocation and release of necessary OPRHP funding to increase the number of park police officers working across the state to coincide with the ongoing 2015 demands presented by seasonal, weekend and holiday crowds, as well as special events.

- Placing command deployment decisions under the temporary supervision of the New York State Police.
- Calling on the Inspector General to conduct a thorough investigation and review of the events transpiring on July 19th, including a review of official and eye witness reports indicating the possession and discharge of firearms at FDR State Park.
- Requesting a State Comptroller's management audit to determine appropriate statewide and regional staffing levels for a police force charged with protecting 60 million annual visitors.
- Directing the OPRHP to increase the size of the 2015, 2016 and 2017 Park Police Academy class; and developing a plan that intensifies recruitment and ensures continued diversity of the park police force.

"With Labor Day nearly upon us I encourage all of residents to enjoy our parks in responsible and safe manner," concluded Senator Murphy. "It is our responsibility to protect our residents and visitors and ensure those patrolling are properly staffed and equipped."