



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Shirley L. Huntley

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SHIRLEY L. HUNTLEY May 22, 2011

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News From New York State

Senator Shirley L. Huntley

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PRESS RELEASE

On May 23rd, the Republican Senate Majority passed an ill-conceived bill that will disproportionately affect minority communities. Senate bill 2322 by Senator Joseph A. Griffo (R-Oneida County) seeks to establish the crime of aggravated harassment of a police officer or peace officer and make such crime a class E felony.

Part of this bill reads as follows: A person is guilty of aggravated harassment of a police officer or peace officer when, with the intent to harass, annoy, threaten or alarm a person whom he or she knows or reasonably should know to be a police officer or peace officer engaged in the course of performing his or her official duties, he or she strikes, shoves, kicks or otherwise subjects such person to physical contact. Aggravated harassment of a police officer or peace officer is a class E felony.

Senator Shirley L. Huntley (D-Jamaica) said, "In the 10th Senatorial District that covers much of Southeast Queens, which I represent, I have seen many instances where fairness and justice did not go hand in hand for young minorities who encountered a police or peace officer."

Those who live in communities where people of color are subjected to stop and frisks and are often unfairly targeted may feel that police and peace officers may be simply trying to increase the amount arrests they make regardless if they're factual or not. Due to the fact a police or peace officer would not have to be injured for them to arrest someone for aggravated harassment provides too much undue influence a police or peace officer could exert by stating a person threatened and pushed them, pitting their word against the defendant.

This bill may have been created with good intentions but it gives police even more reason and leeway to charge individuals with felonies that are in large part unwarranted.