



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Andrea Stewart-Cousins

## Important Bills Passed This Week: Improve Violent Crime Reporting on Campuses, Combat Animal Cruelty, and More!

ANDREA STEWART-COUSINS June 12, 2014

**Stop Sex Offenders From Residing Near Those They Targeted:** New York law lacks any provision to maintain distance between survivors of sex crimes and the sex offenders who attack them. According to a 2001 article in the Westchester County Journal News, a level 3 sex offender deemed a menace to society and likely to repeat his crimes was allowed to live next door to one two children he sexually abused when they were aged 8 and 9. Senate Bill S6778A will prohibit sex offenders from residing within 1500 feet of survivors of their crimes.

**Improve Violent Crime Reporting on College Campuses:** The Campus Safety Act of 1999 requires colleges and universities to adopt and implement plans to notify law enforcement in cases of violent felony offenses or missing persons occurring within their boundaries, but does not specifically mandate that cases be reported to law enforcement. Senate Bill S2753B will strengthen The Campus Safety Act by requiring colleges and universities to report all violent felony offenses and missing persons to law enforcement within 24 hours of receiving reports.

**Enhanced Penalties for Endangering Welfare of a Child:** Endangering the Welfare of a Child is a broadly defined crime that includes offenses ranging from leaving a child in a car unattended to extreme physical abuse, all of which are treated as misdemeanors. Senate Bill S7045 creates a new class-D violent felony offense to be applied to repeat offenders and those who put children at risk of serious physical injury or prolonged impairment, and in cases where the abused child is under the age of 14.

**Inform Survivors of Domestic Violence of Available Programs:** A wide variety of programs and resources are available to survivors of domestic violence. These include counseling and

treatment programs, exemptions from fees and costs commonly incurred during unexpected relocations, domestic violence forensic examiner programs, and guidance in building a case against an assailant. Senate bill S1593B would provide reports to survivors of domestic violence detailing the programs and resources available to them, including:

- Types of counseling, treatment programs, and resources available;
- Domestic violence forensic examiner programs;
- A list of criminal offenses for which domestic violence forensic examiner programs would be of assistance;
- Recommendations to enhance collection of evidence; and
- Evaluation of fiscal costs.

**"Phoenix's Law" to Combat Animal Cruelty:** Aggravated animal cruelty is a felony crime

currently punishable by no more than 2 years in prison regardless of the crime's severity. Research has shown that youth who engage in acts of aggravated cruelty to animals are significantly more likely to engage in violent criminal acts against people. Senate Bill S2129 will increase the maximum penalty to four years in prison and defendants will receive a mandatory psychiatric evaluation and treatment if deemed necessary.

**Improve Reporting of Child Abuse:** Under current State Law, all calls alleging child abuse must be screened by the State Central Register of Child Abuse and Maltreatment before reports are forwarded to law enforcement for investigation. Mandated reporters of child abuse including hospital personnel, social workers, psychologists, and law enforcement trained to recognize and report signs of suspected child abuse, and screening their reports puts children at risk. Senate Bill S2016A will require that all calls made to the Register by mandated reporters be referred directly to local Child Protective Services for investigation.

**Prohibit Persons Convicted of Animal Cruelty From Working at Animal Shelters:** There have been many cases of animal abuse involving an employee or manager of a shelter, humane society, or pound that has abused an animal. There is no law prohibiting such an individual from working in a facility that provides care or shelter to animals similar to laws that prohibit child abusers from working at day care facilities. Senate Bill S583D will prohibit people who have been convicted of animal cruelty from working in any capacity that places them in control of animal care.