



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Joseph P. Addabbo Jr.

Addabbo Joins Senate Colleagues in Approving Legislation to Significantly Increase Penalties for Dangerous Practice of Pointing Lasers at Aircraft

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Howard Beach, NY (June 17, 2016) Noting that the dangerous practice of pointing high-powered lasers at aircrafts can incapacitate pilots and endanger both passengers and innocent people on the ground, Senator Joseph P. Addabbo, Jr. recently voted to approve legislation (S.6815) in the State Senate to increase penalties for this increasingly common crime.

“Given that my district has both LaGuardia and JFK International Airport nearby, many of us are already living with serious issues that come hand-in-hand with being in close proximity to major transportation hubs,” said Addabbo. “Seeing planes crash from irresponsible people directing lasers into cockpits and blinding pilots should never be one of them.”

Addabbo said existing state penalties which can be levied against those who engage in this highly dangerous behavior – ranging from one to four years in prison – simply aren't stringent enough in light of the tragic consequences that can arise from blinding aircraft operators. He pointed to a March 9, 2015 case in which a Bronx man pointed a laser at three passenger planes and a police helicopter as they flew near LaGuardia Airport, which ended with all of the pilots suffering eye injuries, some of which were treated in local hospitals.

“While no one died in this incident, it should certainly serve as a wake-up call that our penalties for this despicable form of ‘laser tag’ need to be increased,” said Addabbo, noting that the original state law addressing the activity was approved in 2014. “This new legislation would enable those who direct laser pointers at aircrafts to be slapped with felony charges carrying from seven to 25 years in prison, depending on the severity of the act. I believe those penalties are more in line with the crime.”

According to the Federal Aviation Administration, there were 5,352 recorded laser strikes from January to October in 2015, up from 2,837 for the entire year of 2010. In 2013, metropolitan New York City airports experienced 99 strikes, an increase from 71 the year before.

“I hope the Assembly will join with the Senate in increasing penalties for this increasingly common and highly dangerous activity,” said Addabbo. “We need to make our skies friendlier, and keep our pilots, aircraft passengers and neighborhoods surrounding airports safe from harm.”

Having passed the Senate, the legislation is now under consideration by the Assembly Committee on Codes.