



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

John J. Flanagan

New York State Senate Creates Task Force on Counterterrorism and Public Protection

JOHN J. FLANAGAN September 20, 2016

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Senate Majority Leader John. J. Flanagan (2nd Senate District) recently announced the creation of the Senate Majority Task Force on Counterterrorism and Public Protection and appointed Senator Thomas Croci (3rd Senate District) as Chair. The Task Force will analyze current counterterrorism and public protection measures that have occurred since September 11, 2001, and will make recommendations for future legislative and administrative actions that will promote the improved public safety of all New Yorkers.

Majority Leader Flanagan said, “As we reflect on the 15th anniversary of the most devastating terror attack on American soil, it’s vital that New York continues to examine ways to improve our state’s counterterrorism and public protection efforts. Despite some successes and the tremendous work of local, state, and federal law enforcement officials, New York remains an ever present and real target for active terrorist groups. This Task Force will allow us to thoroughly review what works and what can be done better to ensure we’re doing everything in our power to keep New Yorkers safe.”

Senator Croci, current Naval Intelligence Commander in the Navy Reserves and Chair of the Senate’s Veterans, Homeland Security, and Military Affairs Committee, said, “New Yorkers have suffered disproportionately from the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. New York must heed the lessons of that day and ensure our state government is focused on preventing another attack, being prepared for the next attack when it happens, and ensuring our first responders and law enforcement receive all of the resources necessary to respond and recover in the event of future attacks. The growing spread of ISIS and the increased frequency of attacks world-wide heightens our concern that New York, which remains the number one target for terrorist groups, should apply the lessons learned in the wake of September 11, 2001, to help New Yorkers have a better chance to live in peace and safety. This Task Force will examine New York’s current posture of preparedness and what must be done expeditiously to ensure our safety.”

The Task Force will focus on the prevention, response, and recovery responsibilities of the state and will include: emergency preparedness plans; critical infrastructure protection; cyber security; state/local counterterrorism; school security; electrical power grid security; telecommunication security; coastal waterway/port security; epidemic response; police capital support; and financial recovery response.

Joining Senator Croci on the Task Force are: Senator Andrew Lanza (R-C-I, Staten Island), Senator Martin Golden (22nd Senate District), Senator Simcha Felder (17th Senate District), Senator Kemp Hannon (6th Senate District), Senator Joseph Griffo (47th Senate District), Senator Joseph Robach (56th Senate District), Senator Patrick Gallivan (59th Senate District), Senator Rob Ortt (62nd Senate District) and Senator Patricia Ritchie (48th Senate District).

Senator Lanza said, “As we remember the horrific terror attacks against the United States 15 years ago and the sacrifices made by the thousands of victims and first responders, many of whom resided on Staten Island, we must stay focused on keeping residents safe from terrorism. Unfortunately, threats from ISIS and other radicals continue to grow and spread. The Senate Task Force on Counterterrorism and Public Protection will work to identify and prevent terror threats, attacks and violence, and ensure that we have the best practices in place to protect New Yorkers from future attacks. I thank Senators Flanagan and Croci for their efforts to make New York a leader in the fight against radical terrorism.”

Senator Ortt said, “Serving on this Task Force and protecting our citizens is a critical responsibility and a tremendous honor. I enlisted in the New York Army National Guard in direct response to the September 11 terrorist attacks against our great nation and our great state. As public officials, it is incumbent upon us to cooperate at all levels of government – from the federal down to the local level – while coordinating the multiple offices, agencies, and departments critical to public security, that serve as stakeholders. By emphasizing key elements of prevention and response, this Counterterrorism Task Force will allow us to focus our efforts on making New York a safer place to live for all residents.”

Senator Golden said, “Fifteen years after September 11th 2001, New York still remains a top target for terrorist attacks and our enemies remain a dangerous and real threat. Therefore, we must strengthen our resolve and review our security protocols to better prepare us for the future. Consequently, the New York State Senate acknowledged the importance to

create a new Senate Majority Task Force on Counterterrorism and Public Protection. This Task Force will seek input from top security professionals, visit potential terrorist targets, and then make recommendations to improve our state's safety. The New York State Senate continues to make counterterrorism and the safety of our state a top priority."

Senator Felder said, "Terrorism wasn't born on September 11th. Nevertheless, it took the scope of our national catastrophe began to open the eyes of those who didn't realize how dangerous a time we live in -- a time when radical Islamist groups attempt to reshape the world by whatever monstrous means they deem necessary. New York remains a principal target, and I fully support the formation of this new Task Force to improve the counterterrorism and public protection efforts in our City and State."

Senator Hannon said, "Even though the tragic events of 9/11 took place 15 years ago, it still feels like yesterday. We must remain ever vigilant in our defense against terrorism and those who seek to do harm to the state and Nation. I'm honored to serve on the Senate Majority Task Force on Counterterrorism and Public Protection, where we will redouble our efforts to ensure New Yorkers are kept safe in an ever-more dangerous world."

Senator Griffo said, "I want to thank the Senate Majority Leader for his confidence in having me serve on this Task Force to improve our state's counterterrorism measures. From my time serving on the Senate Homeland Security Committee, as well as my focus on public protection during my service in local government, I understand the need to always be vigilant against threats to our people and infrastructure. While we must always reconnect with the raw emotion we all experienced on September 11, 2001, we also need to accept that there exists a new normal of terror in today's world. As we've tragically seen on our soil and across the globe, there are no limits to the forms of terrorism that can strike at any time, from unpredictable lone wolf attacks to high-tech cyber wars. Fifteen years after 9/11, we must always ensure with the same level of urgency that we do whatever we can to protect

the people of New York State from any and all acts of terror.”

Senator Robach said, “While the attacks of September 11, 2001, may seem distant to some, its impact is still felt on people throughout New York and nationwide. We as elected representatives have an obligation to ensure the safety and protection of the public; with the creation of this Task Force, we will be able to thoroughly review our state’s safety measures and look for ways to improve our counterterrorism and public protection efforts.”

Senator Gallivan said, “I am honored to serve as a member of this important Task Force. As Sheriff of Erie County at the time, I assisted investigators at Ground Zero in the days after 9/11 and will never forget the devastation caused by the attacks on our state and our country. We know that terrorists can strike anywhere, at anytime, but we also realize that New York remains a real target. That’s why we must remain vigilant in preventing future attacks and keeping our citizens safe from terrorist’s activities. I look forward to working with my colleagues in the Senate to review New York’s counterterrorism efforts.”

Senator Ritchie said, “As the representative of Fort Drum and thousands of brave soldiers who are part of the 10th Mountain Division, one of the Army’s most deployed combat units, I see each and every day the sacrifices made by our troops to protect our state, as well as our country, from terrorism. Despite their dedicated efforts, and the efforts made by law enforcement and others, the reality is that threats remain. I look forward to being part of this Task Force, which will allow us to take a hard look at our current counterterrorism and public protection practices to see how we can improve upon them to make our state safer.”

Following its initial reviews of counterterrorism and public protection activity over the last 15 years, the Task Force will perform research, visit critical infrastructure and public protection sites, conduct private interviews and hold public roundtables and meetings to examine what has worked and what can be done better.

A final report with findings, conclusions and legislative and administrative recommendations will also be published.