



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Thomas F. O'Mara

O'Mara joins call for crackdown on prison contraband, co-sponsors Senate legislation calling for aggressive response

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Elmira, N.Y., March 15—The New York State Senate is moving forward on legislation co-sponsored by Senator Tom O’Mara (R,C,I-Big Flats) to require the state Department of Corrections and Community Supervision (DOCCS) to establish an aggressive, multi-faceted “Contraband Screening Plan” in New York’s correctional facilities.

The Senate Crime Victims, Crime and Correction Committee reported the legislation ([S7582](#)) to the Senate Finance Committee this week.

O'Mara and his Senate colleagues are also seeking funding in the final 2018-19 state budget currently being negotiated. This funding would support K-9 units, body cameras, fixed cameras, metal detectors, body scanners and other investments to enhance safety and security within state correctional facilities.

“We must take every step to protect correction officers, prison staff, inmates, and overall safety and security within the walls of our prisons. This must include an action plan to cut down on the dangerous drugs, weapons, and other contraband finding its way into our correctional facilities and contributing to a rise in violence. Our correction officers are extremely concerned about rising violence, and I share that concern,” said O’Mara, pointing to inmate fights involving makeshift weapons

that led to [temporary lock downs in the Elmira Correctional Facility in February.](#)

O'Mara also noted that the New York State Correctional Officers & Police Benevolent Association, Inc. (NYSCOPBA) [recently renewed the call for stepped-up efforts](#) to cut down on drugs, weapons, and other dangerous contraband being smuggled into New York's correctional facilities. NYSCOPBA points to 2017 as potentially "the most violent year inside state prisons since 2007" with inmate-on-staff assaults, inmate-on-inmate assaults, and the smuggling of dangerous contraband into prisons on the rise.

NYSCOPBA President Michael Powers aid, "These alarming statistics reinforce NYSCOPBA's resolve to fight on behalf of our members until measures are enacted that will create a safer environment for inmates and correctional staff alike. We stand ready to assist in any way with the adoption of measures that will eliminate the opportunity for dangerous contraband to make its way into our facilities."

NYSCOPBA supports the legislation O'Mara co-sponsors, which calls for DOCCS to put forth a comprehensive "Contraband Screening Plan" that would include:

- > Pat frisks and visual searches of visitors to correctional facilities;
- >The random selection and search of visitors' vehicles;
- > The use of a controlled K-9 search at the entrance of every state prison;
- > Electronic imaging scanning; and
- > Enhanced staff training on up-to-date contraband screening procedures.