



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Thomas F. O'Mara

Senate approves legislation calling for crackdown on prison contraband: O'Mara co-sponsors Senate legislation calling for aggressive response

THOMAS F. O'MARA June 19, 2018

| ISSUE: **PRISON SAFETY**



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Albany, N.Y., June 19—The New York State Senate has approved 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 legislation (**S7582**) now goes to the Assembly. It is sponsored in the Senate by Senator Pam Helming (R,C,I-Canandaigua).

“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 earlier this year.**

O’Mara also noted that the New York State Correctional Officers & Police Benevolent Association, Inc. (NYSCOPBA) has **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 has pointed to 2017 as the most violent year inside state prisons in a decade with inmate-on-staff assaults, inmate-on-inmate assaults, and the smuggling of dangerous contraband into prisons on the rise. Last year, there were 4,124 incidences of contraband compared to 2,483 in 2010. The number of assaults on staff statewide increased from 645 incidents in 2013 to 798 in 2017.

NYSCOPBA President Michael Powers said, “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.