



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Robert G. Ortt

# **Ortt: Cuomo Pardons Could Let Hundreds of Sex Offenders into Schools on Election Day**

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Hundreds of child rapists and sex offenders, including high risk offenders who are deemed a “threat to public safety,” those with long rap sheets and some with victims as young as two years old, were included along with cop killer Herman Bell and other violent felons among those pardoned by the Governor last month and could be headed to school polling places to vote this fall.

While it’s impossible to know the exact number, since the Governor has not released names of the 24,086 felons issued pardons, a simple search of the state’s “Megan’s Law” registry against a public database of parolees in Western New York exposed dozens of sex offenders receiving the extraordinary pardons. There are 63 Senate districts, so the total is undoubtedly much higher and could reach thousands.

The registry includes names of sex offenders who are designated by a sentencing judge as “Level 2” if they pose a “moderate risk of repeat offense,” and “Level 3” when a “high risk of repeat offense and a threat to public safety exists.”

Among the high risk sex offenders receiving Governor’s pardons are a Niagara County sex offender charged with having sex with two children, aged 10 and 11, as well as offenders who used guns, clubs, fists and other weapons to subdue and attack their victims.

“The Governor ignored serious concerns raised by lawmakers and unilaterally pardoned 24,000 criminals last month,” said Senator Rob Ortt. “We’re already seeing the dangerous ramifications of these misguided, politically-motivated blanket pardons – countless Level 2 and Level 3 sex offenders will soon be voting in our schools. With the Governor making clear that he intends to pardon tens of thousands of parolees each month, we have an immediate obligation to prevent sexual predators from entering our schools and endangering our children.”

Schools are widely used as polling places across the state, with voters often interspersed with the general student population during school-polling hours. Polling inspectors generally can’t ask voters for identification, so it’s unlikely they would know a voter is listed on the registry. Being listed on the registry as a sex offender also is not among six approved reasons—such as being absent from the county or a resident of a nursing home—a voter can cite for the need to vote by mail using an absentee ballot. Ortt said he will continue to compile data and share findings with local police and school officials.

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