



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Joseph A. Griffo

Sen. Griffo: Legislation would make threats of mass violence a crime

JOSEPH A. GRIFFO November 28, 2018

UTICA – As the trial of Fahrudin Omerovic takes place in Oneida County Court, state Sen. Joseph Griffo, R-I-C-Rome, is pushing legislation he introduced that would criminalize threats of mass violence against schools, colleges and universities, places of worship, businesses and mass gatherings.

Omerovic is accused of allegedly calling in several threats to Utica College in March, resulting in the campus going on lockdown for several hours, the evacuation of students and staff and a heavy police presence. Omerovic is now facing two counts of making a terroristic threat.

Sen. Griffo's bill (S8312) would amend the penal law and would establish a new crime of making a threat of mass violence toward a school, college or university, place of worship, mass gathering of twenty-five people or more or a business if the threat is made in writing, verbally communicated or expressed through any other means of communication.

The legislation creates two crimes:

- Making a threat of mass violence in the first degree would be considered a class D felony and would apply to anyone 18 years of age or older. The punishment for this crime would be a \$35,000 fine and a sentence of no less than three years in prison.

- Making a threat of mass violence in the second degree apply to individuals under the age of 18 and carry a fine of \$35,000 and a mandatory sentence of 10 days in a juvenile detention facility. Individuals over 18 who make a threat of mass violence against the school that they are attending would be charged with the same crime and administered the same punishment as an individual under the age of 18.

“Threats of mass violence have resulted in widespread fear and disruption and come at significant cost to the communities in which the threats are made,” Sen. Griffo said.

“Currently, the consequences of such threats are minor. Those who decide to make a threat of mass violence need to understand that there are real consequences for doing so. This bill will ensure that individuals making these threats are punished accordingly.”

“Threats of mass violence against schools, churches, businesses and other institutions where people gather can cause panic, stress and hardship for those who find themselves in the wrong place at the wrong time,” Oneida County Sheriff Robert Maciol said. “These threats need to be taken very seriously and the perpetrators of such acts need to know there will be serious repercussions for their actions. I applaud Sen. Griffo for introducing this legislation because it will provide a real consequence for anyone threatening to harm a group of people.”

“I would welcome any legislation that would help us address the increased threats of violence directed at schools and businesses,” Oneida County District Attorney Scott McNamara said. “Over the past few years in Oneida County, we have seen many threats to local educational institutions, as well as private businesses. It would be very helpful for police and prosecutors to have a law that addresses these types of threats and does not require proof of many of the elements contained in the terrorism statutes.”

Sen. Griffo’s legislation is currently in the state Senate’s Codes Committee.

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