



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

## Ritchie: Put Crime Victims First, Pass the “Victims' Justice Agenda”

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ISSUE:

- [criminal justice](#)
- [New York State Parole Board](#)



Senator Patty Ritchie joined her colleagues at the Capitol Tuesday to propose a number of measures that would result in true reform within New York State's criminal justice system. The changes, which include a bill sponsored by Senator Ritchie, aim to reform the parole board system and protect the victims of violent crimes, as well as their families and the public.

"The fact remains that recent bills passed by Democrats in both the Senate and Assembly are referred to as the "Criminal's Bill of Rights" for a reason. The scales of justice are tilted much too far toward violent criminals—and not the victims of their heinous actions," Senator Ritchie said.

"This package of bills allows New York State to show it is tough on crime and genuinely concerned about crime victims, their loved ones and the safety of the public."

The package of bills brought forth by Senate Republicans Tuesday, called the "Victims' Justice Agenda," aims to ensure the parole system keeps violent criminals behind bars and eases the parole process for suffering victims, families and the general public.

Recent measures passed by Democrats, which were widely opposed by district attorneys and law enforcement officials across New York State, have led to the parole of a number of violent criminals and cop killers, including most recently Judith Clark, who participated in the 1981 Brinks heist that left two police officers and a security guard dead.

Included in Victim's Justice Agenda is a measure sponsored by Senator Ritchie (S.1410), which would require the state parole board to consider statements made to the board by a third party—such as a victim's family and friends—when weighing whether or not to grant parole. In addition, the bill would ensure all aspects of statements, not just the name and address of the person who provided it, would be kept confidential and only made available to the parole board.

"Limiting testimony to only the victim and not allowing for additional input from other family members or the impacted community, results in a failure to accurately depict the far-reaching effect of serious crimes," added Senator Ritchie.

“In addition, statements provided to parole boards often give away the identity of the person offering the information. Simply redacting a name and address is not enough to ensure an individual will not be identified and kept safe after speaking out against a violent criminal.”

A full list of legislation included in the Victims’ Justice Agenda can be found below.

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## **VICTIMS’ JUSTICE AGENDA**

**S.1995 - Little** - Provides that the sentence for murder in the first degree shall be life imprisonment without parole.

**S.357 - Tedisco** - Authorizes imposition of life imprisonment without parole sentence for persistent violent felony offenders upon conviction of a violent felony offense when such person has previously been subjected to two or more predicate violent felony convictions.

**S.1410 - Ritchie** - Requires that all comments and testimony made by a third party either in support or opposition in a parole hearing shall be considered when coming to a decision; adds provisions relating to confidentiality of victim statements.

**S.4127 - Tedisco** - Requires that all victim impact statements in New York state be video recorded; requires that the members of the parole board review all relevant victim impact statements prior to the conduct of a parole hearing.

**S.1745 - Gallivan** - Provides that any person interested in the grant or denial of discretionary release shall have the right to submit a written statement of views in support of or in opposition to the granting of discretionary release which the parole board may consider.

**S.5320 - Antonacci** - Requires unanimous consent of the Parole Board to release an inmate on parole.

**S.3734 - LaValle** - Requires inmates to have an acceptable residence to qualify for parole.

**S.4354 - LaValle** - Enacts "Lorraine's Law"; increases from twenty-four to sixty months, the time for which reconsideration for parole for a violent felony offense shall be determined.

**S.3268 - Lanza** - Enacts "Cesar's law" to require the retaking of parolees, who abscond from the supervision of the state board of parole.

**S.4644 - Helming** - Enacts "The Domestic Violence Protection Act - Brittany's Law" requiring registration of violent felony offenders; sets forth duties of the division of criminal justice services; establishes a special telephone number; requires the division to maintain a subdirectory of violent predators.

**S.1406 - Helming** - "Clara's Law" Requires health care facilities to report incidents of a sexual offense to the departments of health and education.