



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Robert G. Ortt

Danger: NYS Senate GOP Leader Ortt Blasts Senate Democrats After Witness Video Appears on Youtube Thanks to Democrat Criminal Justice Reforms

ROBERT G. ORTT September 23, 2020

| ISSUE: **CRIMINAL JUSTICE REFORM**



Albany, NY – New York State Senate Republican Leader Rob Ortt today blasted State Senate Democrats who failed to listen to concerns over witness safety before passing so-called criminal justice “reforms,” after a video tagged “Rat Files” emerged on YouTube. It contains a clip turned over by the Albany District Attorney’s office to a defense attorney.

A second video, also turned over by the Albany District Attorney's office, with the same witness speaking to Albany police is titled with four emoji rats.

"State Senate Democrats failed to heed our warnings that bail reform and discovery reform presented real danger to real people. Now, in addition to all the failures of bail reform, two videos of a witness posted on YouTube pose a threat to a human being. Why would anyone want to risk their safety to talk to police or testify if sensitive information like this could be circulated on social media? Once again, this is a major public safety fail," said Senate Republican Leader Rob Ortt.

The videos contain police interviews of an alleged participant in a shooting, who discloses to Albany Police information on another shooter. The interviewee discusses a number of criminal activities including burglary and gun purchases.

The Albany County District Attorney's office confirmed that the videos that appear on YouTube were turned over electronically as part of mandatory discovery. The identity of the person who uploaded the video is unknown, but "Rat Files" racked up 33,000 views. The other video is uploaded by the same individual.

Discovery reform forces prosecutors to turn over all discoverable evidence to criminal defense attorneys in a short span of time, and prosecutors, police, victims, and Republicans warned it would have a chilling impact on people coming forward with information on crimes, and could lead to acts of retribution against witnesses and people willing to cooperate in cases.

###