



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

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Police Deserve Our Support

PATRICK GALLIVAN September 25, 2020

| ISSUE: **RESPECTING LAW ENFORCEMENT**



Most of my career has been spent in law enforcement. While a trooper with the New York State Police, I earned a master's degree in criminal justice from SUNY Albany. I was then honored to be twice elected as Sheriff of Erie County. I come from a law enforcement family. My father, uncle and brother are all retired NYS troopers. I have great respect for those who work hard to serve and protect our communities and can attest that the vast majority of officers are honorable people who care about the residents they serve.

No law enforcement professional would tolerate the use of excessive force, the abuse of suspects or acts of racism. Such incidents must be fully investigated and bad officers must be held accountable. Every police agency has strict rules and regulations that must be followed and disciplinary processes for dealing with officers who violate the rules. It was my job, as Sheriff, to enforce the regulations, which in some cases resulted in the dismissal of officers.

There has been much attention recently on the actions of a handful of bad officers. This has resulted in calls for reform of our law enforcement and criminal justice system, but in my experience, police agencies are constantly reforming procedures and operations to reflect changes in our society, the adoption of new laws and advances in technology.

Many agencies are accredited, which means they have adopted and follow the best practices of policing. In fact, the first state-level accreditation program was started by the New York State Sheriff's Association over 25 years ago and is now offered to all police agencies in the state. Law enforcement organizations also participate in officer training programs to promote community outreach, conflict resolution, diversion techniques, and violence reduction and prevention.

Police officers must also adapt to changes in the communities they serve and must often respond to situations not traditionally handled by law enforcement. Reforms in some social service programs have too often left police to deal with individuals suffering from mental health issues. This is cause for great concern for those in both the criminal justice and mental health fields. In these matters, we may want to consider if we are asking police officers to do too much.

Law enforcement managers strive to ensure their agencies are run professionally and that they and their officers are accountable to the residents they serve. We demand that police

are well trained and prepared to protect our communities. Police officers, in a very difficult job, put their lives on the line every day for us. In return, they deserve our support.