



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Thomas F. O'Mara

O'Mara will sponsor legislation to strengthen Parole Board oversight: Charges pro-criminal mentality is endangering public safety

THOMAS F. O'MARA October 13, 2020

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Elmira, N.Y., October 13—State Senator Tom O'Mara (R-C-I, Big Flats) will help sponsor legislation in the Senate to establish stronger legislative oversight of the state Parole Board.

The board has come under fire over the past two years by O'Mara and other state legislators for its leniency in releasing convicted cop killers and other violent criminals.

O'Mara, ranking member of the Senate Judiciary Committee, said, "What in the name of justice is going on? Over the past two years, this Parole Board has shown a dangerous and disturbing habit of favoring cop killers and other violent criminals over crime victims and their families and loved ones. It has been alarming to district attorneys, law enforcement officers and criminal justice experts. We need to stand up, speak out and work against it. It's a pro-criminal mentality that keeps going too far in New York State with leniency and insensitivity at the Parole Board, disastrous bail reform that has made the state less safe, and a building movement in the current Legislature to 'defund the police.'"

In early September, Samuel Ayala was inexplicably paroled and released after being convicted in 1977 of raping and murdering two Westchester mothers while their children were present. Two years ago the board released Herman Bell, who was convicted with two others in 1971 of assassinating two New York Police Department officers. Anthony Bottom, who was convicted along with Bell for the 1971 cop killings, was recently granted parole and is expected to go free later this month.

The legislation O'Mara will help sponsor, which is in the process of being introduced in both houses of the Legislature, would strengthen legislative oversight of the 19-member Parole Board by steps including:

- > Allowing members of the state Board of Parole to be removed by a majority vote of the Senate and Assembly, in addition to removal by the governor;
- > Requiring a minimum of three (currently two) members of the 19-member parole board to interview inmates seeking parole; and
- > Requiring a unanimous vote of the three members for each determination on parole (currently only a majority is required).

NYPD Police Benevolent Association President Patrick J. Lynch recently said, "Under Governor Cuomo and the Albany Democrats, New York has become a state that puts criminals first and crime victims last. Nowhere is that more evident than in the parole board's reckless release of murderers, rapists and cop-killers. For far too long, these radical parole commissioners have hidden behind bureaucracy while they pursued their radical, pro-criminal agenda."