



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Thomas F. O'Mara

O'Mara says inmate attacks at Elmira Correctional Facility signal need to address prison violence, not keep taking actions that put officers at greater risk

THOMAS F. O'MARA April 22, 2021

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NYSCOPBA has noted that more than 80 percent of inmates housed in maximum security facilities like Elmira are convicted of violent felony offenses. Incidents of inmate-on-inmate and inmate-on-staff assaults have been at some of the highest-ever levels over the past few years.

Elmira, N.Y., April 22—State Senator Tom O'Mara (R-C,I-Big Flats) today said that multiple attacks by inmates on correctional officers at the Elmira Correctional Facility during the

past week continue to highlight the need for Governor Andrew Cuomo and the Democratic leaders of the State Legislature to address the rising violence inside state prisons.

According to the New York State Correctional Officers & Police Benevolent Association, Inc.

(NYSCOPBA) in a news release today, beginning on Thursday, April 15, approximately 10 officers at the Elmira Correctional Facility were attacked during separate incidents at the prison over the past week.

O'Mara said, "Governor Cuomo and the Legislature's Democratic supermajorities have been solely focused on closing prisons and risking prison overcrowding, finding ways to parole more and more inmates, and diminishing the ability of correctional officers to deal with violence inside prisons. These series of attacks inside the Elmira Correctional Facility should serve as a stark reminder that steps are needed to better protect correctional officers, prison staff, inmates themselves, and the overall safety and security within the walls of our prisons. This must include a revitalized action plan to cut down on the dangerous drugs, weapons, and other contraband finding its way into our correctional facilities and contributing to a rise in violence. Our correctional officers are extremely concerned about rising violence inside prisons and I share that concern. Governor Cuomo and New York's current legislative leadership are moving in the completely opposite and wrong direction. It's a carefree approach to criminal justice and corrections, and it's irresponsible and dangerous."

Most recently, O'Mara noted, the Legislature approved and Cuomo signed into law a measure O'Mara, as well as NYSCOPBA, strongly opposed strictly limiting the use of solitary confinement in New York's correctional facilities. The governor signed the new law despite noting in his own approval message that it will need to be amended in order to protect correctional officers and prison staff from violent inmates, O'Mara said.

In today's NYSCOPBA announcement, NYSCOPBA Western Region Vice President Mark Deburgomaster said, "Officers sustaining injuries at the hands of inmates has become a common occurrence across the state. The circumstances might vary, but the attacks are unprovoked and are continuing at a rapid pace. Instead of solely focusing on weakening the disciplinary system, our elected officials should be taking a long look at why these attacks are occurring and doing everything in their power to keep staff safe from future attacks!"

O'Mara continues to co-sponsor legislation (S2594) to require the state Department of Corrections and Community Supervision (DOCCS) to establish a multi-faceted "Contraband Screening Plan" for New York's correctional facilities.

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