



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Thomas F. O'Mara

Senator O'Mara's weekly column 'From the Capitol' ~ for the week of January 3, 2022 ~ 'Law and order cannot take a back seat'

THOMAS F. O'MARA January 3, 2022

| ISSUE: **CRIME AND CORRECTIONS**



Law and order matters. It must be a top priority in 2022.

Senator O'Mara offers his weekly perspective on many of the key challenges and issues facing the Legislature, as well as on legislative actions, local initiatives, state programs and policies, and more. Stop back every Monday for Senator O'Mara's latest column...

This week, "Law and order cannot take a back seat"

ALBANY, Jan. 3, 2022 -- Starting this week when Governor Kathy Hochul delivers her inaugural State of the State address to the Legislature, we'll begin getting a firmer indication of the direction New York will be heading in 2022.

The governor's State of the State speech will be followed by information-gathering season at the Capitol with the Legislature holding public hearings on the governor's 2021-22 proposed state budget. The hearing topics highlight many of the responsibilities we annually face: environmental conservation, transportation, health care, education, local government, economic development, and taxes, for example.

In other words, it's always a full plate of challenges. As the ranking member on the Senate Finance Committee, I look forward to the opportunities these hearings provide to stake out the priorities of the Senate Republican Conference and the upstate regions many of us represent.

With that in mind, it's also a sure bet that public safety and security will continue to take center stage.

That's because for the foreseeable future, new laws already enacted (and under consideration) by this governor and a state Legislature under one-party, downstate Democrat control (with a far-left, radical, self-proclaimed Democratic Socialist wing of the party firmly entrenched at the highest levels of decision making) has turned this state's system of criminal justice into something that many everyday citizens simply do not recognize or understand.

Most reasonable people agree that public safety is a fundamental responsibility. That is not

the thinking in this one-party Legislature.

Many New Yorkers are well aware that rising crime and violence, and weakened public safety and security, in so many of our cities and communities are the result of the pro-criminal policies being enacted and pushed by a state government under one-party control. They have emboldened the criminal element throughout this state through failed bail reform, lenient parole policies, an out-of-control Parole Board, a terrible lack of attention to prison safety, cowing to the “defund the police” movement, and an overall careless approach to criminal justice.

Enough is enough.

Senate Republicans will continue our push to strengthen protections for law enforcement and first responders through a “Protect Those Who Protect Us” package of legislation, as well as a series of badly needed parole reform measures.

We will continue advancing legislation to better protect state correctional officers and prison employees by taking more aggressive steps to address the rising violence inside state prisons. Inmate attacks on correctional officers, including numerous attacks inside the Elmira Correctional Facility throughout the past few years, should serve as a stark reminder that steps are needed to enhance safety for officers, prison staff, inmates themselves, and overall safety and security within the walls of our prisons.

Safeguarding crime victims is another critical part of an ongoing criminal justice agenda geared towards restoring common sense and public safety in New York.

We need to stand up, speak out, and fight against the pro-criminal, anti-police mentality and policies that keep going too far in New York State. Governor Hochul and the Democrat supermajorities in control of the State Legislature show no signs of letting up in their push

for a so-called progressive agenda that only stands to embolden criminals and keep making this state and our communities less safe. We need to enact legislation, and programs and policies, that put crime victims and community safety first.

For me, the bottom line is straightforward: What is best for public safety?

For this governor and this Legislature to have public safety keep taking a back seat to ideology (or, even worse, political gain) is wrong, it's irresponsible, it's dangerous, and it puts all of us at risk.

Law and order matters. It must be a top priority in 2022.