



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

James Skoufis

## Skoufis, Paulin Rally with Advocates to Call for Passage of Long-Overdue Cyberflashing Legislation

JAMES SKOUFIS May 16, 2022

| ISSUE: **CYBERFLASHING, UNSOLICITED IMAGES, ONLINE PRIVACY, PUBLIC SAFETY**



**Senator James Skoufis** (D-Hudson Valley) and **Assemblymember Amy Paulin** (D-Westchester) gathered with representatives from Bumble, the National Organization for Women (NOW), the National Women's Political Caucus, and other advocates at the Capitol to urge fellow lawmakers to advance their long-overdue cyberflashing legislation ([S.6420A](#) / [A.318B](#)). This legislation would establish the offense of unsolicited disclosure of an intimate image as a criminal violation.

A 2022 survey by Bumble, the women-first dating and social networking app, found that nearly half of all respondents (46%) have received unsolicited, obscene images in their lifetime, and almost 1 in 3 (29%) had received them within the past month\*. These images are frequently conveyed anonymously between mobile phones via text or digital file sharing services, and often on mass transit or in large public settings—violating the recipient’s personal space and undermining their sense of safety. For recipients who have a history of sexual trauma, such a violation can trigger intense emotional distress.

The act of cyberflashing draws clear parallels with indecent exposure, which is already on the books as a punishable offense in New York. Similar cyberflashing legislation has already become law in Virginia and Texas, and is on track for adoption in California. In addition to criminal penalties, individuals convicted of cyberflashing would be required to enroll in a sexual harassment prevention training course.

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*“State law simply hasn’t kept up with new digital forms of harassment and exposure, and we must do better,” said Senator Skoufis. “I am proud to be working with Assemblymember Paulin and the advocates gathered today to make cyberflashing a crime once and for all. This kind of invasive and abhorrent behavior will not be tolerated in New York, and I urge my colleagues to bring this key piece of legislation to a vote before session’s end.”*

“Cyberflashing is a relentless, everyday form of harassment that causes victims, predominantly women, to feel distressed, violated, and vulnerable in their daily lives,” said **Assemblymember Amy Paulin**. “Particularly concerning is the very intrusive way that these nonconsensual sexual images are sent. In many ways, cyberflashing is worse than being flashed in the street - with the offender unknown, and no one seeing what’s happening, it’s like an invasion into the very personal space of your phone which is impossible to ignore or

forget. Cyberflashing is illegal offline and should also be illegal online. There is no longer a distinction between the two and action is required to ensure that New York law keeps pace. I thank Senator Skoufis for his partnership on this bill and together we will fight for its passage to make cyberflashing a crime in New York State."

"Since Bumble's establishment in 2014, we have been committed to empowering kind and respectful relationships for everyone, both on and offline. With the passage of A318A/S6420A, New York would become the third state to take a stand against cyberflashing, bringing our standards for conduct in the digital world closer to those upheld in the real world," said **Payton Iheme, Bumble's Head of Public Policy for the Americas**. "We're proud to stand alongside Assemblywoman Amy Paulin, Senator James Skoufis, the National Women's Political Caucus, the National Organization for Women, and bi-partisan state lawmakers in this important initiative and look forward to New York joining this institutional change."

"Texting and emailing unsolicited intimate images continues to increase among people of all ages. There is bipartisan support all over the country for legislation that would make indecent exposure and lewd digital communications illegal," according to **Donna Lent, National Women's Political Caucus President**. "Although research shows that a high percentage of young women are receiving unwanted explicit images, this can happen to anyone who has a cell phone that is listed publicly. I have had the same cell phone number for at least 35 years - my phone number is everywhere. This is a problem for women in all walks of life as it can happen anywhere, airports and Disney World included. We must do what we can to stop this unwanted delivery of intimate images"

"This legislation is a vital step forward to help women feel safer – online and off," added **Christian Nunes, President of the National Organization for Women**. "As our digital and physical lives continue to intertwine, we must ensure we have similar standards of conduct and

protection. The National Organization for Women is proud to join Bumble, Assemblywoman Amy Paulin, Senator James Skoufis, and the National Women's Political Caucus to support this landmark legislation. We hope New York will be a model for reform across the country to finally eradicate cyberflashing.”

*\*According to a survey commissioned by Bumble between March 9 to March 11, 2022 conducted within the United States amongst a sample of approximately 1,000 adults.*

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#### RELATED LEGISLATION

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### 2021-S6420A

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- Introduced
- - In Committee Assembly
  - In Committee Senate
- - On Floor Calendar Assembly
  - On Floor Calendar Senate

- - Passed Assembly
  - Passed Senate
- Delivered to Governor
- Signed By Governor
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Relates to establishing the offense of unsolicited disclosure of an intimate image

April 27, 2021

In Senate Committee [Rules](#)

Sponsored by [James Skoufis](#)

Do you support this bill?