

# Victims First Agenda

**PUTTING CRIME VICTIMS FIRST**

**A Report on Listening Sessions  
with Crime Victims, Advocates,  
Service Providers, and  
Law Enforcement  
Across New York State**

**April 2026**

**Prepared by  
New York State Senators  
Dean Murray, Rob Rolison & Patrick Gallivan**



## **Purpose of This Report**

This report summarizes the findings of a statewide series of Crime Victims Roundtables convened to assess how New York's laws and policies function in practice for crime victims and survivors. It outlines key themes identified during these discussions and presents a legislative framework to strengthen victims' rights, improve public safety, and enhance accountability within the criminal justice system.

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### Executive Summary

Over the course of the past year, New York State Senators Dean Murray, Patrick Gallivan, and Rob Rolison convened a series of statewide Crime Victims Roundtables to hear directly from individuals and organizations impacted by crime and those working within New York's criminal justice system. Roundtables were held in **Buffalo, Long Island, and Poughkeepsie**, with over 40 participants testifying ensuring broad geographic representation and diverse stakeholder participation.

The purpose of these forums was to evaluate how New York's laws and policies affecting crime victims function in practice, identify gaps in enforcement and access, and inform future legislative and administrative action. Participants consistently emphasized that while New York has codified victims' rights, **implementation, enforcement, coordination, and communication remain uneven across the state.**

Several key findings emerged. Victims frequently experience notification failures regarding arrests, arraignments, plea agreements, sentencing decisions, and release information. Many reported heightened safety concerns in the period immediately following arraignment

or release, particularly when orders of protection are inconsistently issued, enforced, or communicated. Participants also emphasized that statutory victims' rights often lack meaningful enforcement mechanisms, resulting in unequal protections depending on jurisdiction.

Across every region, victims expressed a deep concern that criminal justice legislation is too often developed with a primary focus on individuals accused or convicted of crimes, without adequate recognition of how such legislation directly and indirectly affects crime victims. Victims reported a widespread perception that **there is insufficient understanding among lawmakers that any legislation impacting criminal procedure, release conditions, sentencing, or supervision almost invariably impacts victim safety, access to information, and meaningful participation in the justice process.** Participants stressed that reforms focused solely on defendants frequently produce unintended consequences that burden victims and weaken existing protections.

Access to trauma informed, survivor centered services was identified as another critical gap. Local victim assistance providers often operate with limited and unstable resources despite serving as a primary point of contact for survivors. Additionally, stakeholders highlighted persistent interagency coordination challenges among law enforcement, prosecutors, courts, hospitals, corrections, and service providers. These breakdowns delay services, retraumatize victims, and undermine accountability.

Based on these findings, the roundtables identified shared reform priorities focused on improving interagency coordination, strengthening victim notification and participation, enhancing post arraignment safety protections, expanding access to victim services, and increasing accountability for repeat and violent offenders. These priorities form the basis of a coordinated legislative framework outlined in this report.

The recommendations set forth represent a balanced approach that prioritizes victim safety, fairness, and accountability while respecting due process. This report serves as a roadmap for translating lived experience into legislative action, ensuring that crime victims are treated with dignity, respect, and transparency throughout the criminal justice process.

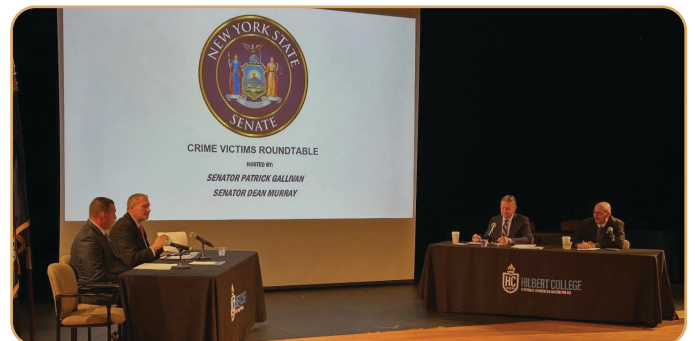
This report consolidates the findings from the completed roundtable series and outlines **legislative and policy reforms** focused on strengthening victims' rights, improving safety and accountability, and enhancing access to trauma informed services.

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## Listening. Formulating an Agenda. Taking Action.

The Crime Victims Roundtables were convened to ensure lawmakers heard directly from crime victims, survivors, victim advocates, service providers, prosecutors, law enforcement professionals, and community organizations. These discussions were intentionally designed to move beyond theory and examine how laws function in **real world situations**.

Participants were encouraged to identify barriers victims face at every stage of the criminal justice process, including reporting, arraignment, court proceedings, depositions, and post-release supervision. The roundtables reaffirmed the importance of grounding public safety policy in **lived experience** and **professional expertise**.



## **Key Findings**

Across all regions and disciplines, several recurring themes emerged.

### **1) Victims' Rights Notification Gaps & Information Gathering**

Participants reported inconsistent notification regarding arrests, arraignments, plea agreements, sentencing decisions, and release information. There needs to be a more reliable way to gather the victim information at the time an offender is sentenced, making sure the DOCCS has that information as soon as possible and can notify the victims when their opportunity to make a statement comes. Victims frequently lack timely and accurate information, limiting their ability to participate meaningfully or take necessary safety precautions. DOCCS needs to set up the availability for victims to record a video statement for distribution to the ACTUAL parole board members that will be interviewing and making the decision about granting or denying parole to the inmate that perpetrated the crime against the victim.

### **2) Post Arraignment Safety Concerns**

Victims consistently identified the period immediately following arraignment or release as one of heightened vulnerability. Orders of protection are not always issued or enforced consistently, and victims are not always informed when conditions change.

### **3) Inconsistent Enforcement of Statutory Protections**

While victims' rights are established in statute, participants emphasized that few enforcement mechanisms or remedies exist when those rights are not upheld. This results in uneven protections depending on geography or agency practices.

### **4) Limited Access to Victim Services**

Access to trauma informed, survivor centered services remains uneven statewide. Local victim assistance providers often operate with limited and unstable resources despite serving as the primary point of contact for survivors.

### **5) Interagency Coordination Challenges**

Participants highlighted deficiencies in coordination and data sharing among law enforcement, prosecutors, courts, hospitals, corrections, and service providers. Poor coordination delays services, retraumatizes victims, and weakens overall system effectiveness.



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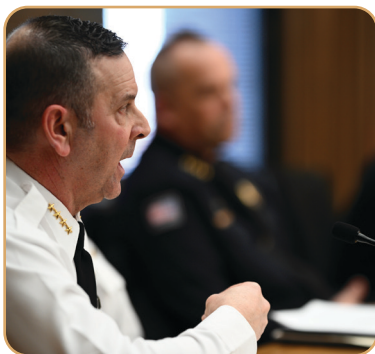
### 6) Inadequate Consideration of Victim Impact in Criminal Justice Legislation

Victims consistently expressed concern that criminal justice legislation is often formulated with a primary focus on individuals accused or convicted of crimes, without sufficient consideration of the direct and collateral impacts such legislation has on crime victims. Participants emphasized that **laws affecting criminal procedure, release conditions, sentencing, or supervision almost invariably affect victim safety, access to information, and meaningful participation in the justice process.**

Numerous participants indicated that there is a persistent lack of understanding among policymakers that **any legislation impacting individuals involved in the criminal justice system also impacts crime victims**, whether through changes to post arraignment safety, notification requirements, enforcement of court orders, or accountability measures. Victims stressed that the absence of a structured victim impact perspective in the legislative process has contributed to unintended consequences that place additional burdens on those already harmed by crime.

### 7) Improperly Assessing the Victims Situation

Lethality assessments are a useful tool for law enforcement when responding to a domestic dispute. Studies have shown that the combination of questioning of victims while immediately providing resources for victims is a powerful tool in reducing deadly outcomes for victims. This “collaborative police and social service intervention” is a way to ensure all police departments are able to utilize this tool aimed at fully assessing a domestic situation. Through the lethality assessment and resource sharing, law enforcement empowers victims with information and would provide consistency across the state in the application and reporting of facts during a domestic dispute, potentially saving their lives.



## Legislative Measures from Roundtable Discussions

As a result of these discussions, the Senators have put together a package of several new pieces of legislation:

### **S.7296 SENATOR RHOADS**

Calls for the creation of a statewide Crime Victims Advocate

### **S.8531A SENATOR ROLISON**

Addresses changes to “Raise the Age”

### **S.8890 SENATOR MURRAY**

“Sarah’s Law” which addresses the abatement ab initio doctrine

### **S.9970 SENATOR MURRAY**

Requiring DCJS to create an annual report regarding Violent Crime Fatalities

### **SENATOR GALLIVAN**

Clarifying the legal definition of Strangulation. *(bill to be introduced)*

In addition, the forums provided an important opportunity to examine gaps within the current system, elevate the voices of those directly impacted by crime, and advance meaningful policy reform.



## Existing Crime Victims Legislation

Additionally, the forums provided an important opportunity to look at some previously introduced legislation that should be adopted.

**S.144 PALUMBO** – Repeals the portion of the criminal procedure law dealing with discovery and the ability for a defendant to request access to a crime scene or other relevant premises

**S.2282-A HELMING** – Enacts the “pretrial risk overview for threat evaluation, custody, and treatment (PROTECT) Act” to evaluate certain defendants; establishes a risk assessment instrument to aid judges in determining whether to release or detain a principal, repeals provisions of law relating to qualifying offenses and allows a court to set bail or remand a principal based on the risk assessment instrument and where the principal poses a safety risk or risk of flight.

**S.3639 MURRAY** – “Nick’s Law” is named in memory of Nicholas Puzio and increases the penalties for leaving the scene of a motor vehicle accident involving the death of an individual or more commonly known as a hit and run.

**S.6878 CANZONERI-FITZPATRICK** – Permits the court to withhold names, contact information, and statements of any victim or eyewitness from discovery where the defendant is associated with a criminal street gang or the offense is connected to a criminal street gang or criminal enterprise activity.

**S.7005 ROLISON** – Establishes a waiver program allowing for longer stays at domestic violence shelters to better serve the victims and providing for the shelters reimbursement.

**S.9726 HELMING** – Enacts Pete’s law which provides that the prosecution for a fatal hit-and-run may occur at any time, eliminating the current statute of limitations. New York law recognizes that certain offenses resulting in death warrant no statute of limitations and a fatal hit-and-run, involving death and the decision to flee, merits comparable treatment.



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## Policy Themes and Reform Priorities

The roundtables demonstrated broad agreement on the need for reforms that:

- Improve coordination among criminal justice and human service agencies
- Expand trauma informed, survivor centered practices
- Strengthen orders of protection and victim safety measures
- Ensure timely notification and meaningful victim participation
- Increase accountability for repeat and violent offenders
- Ensure that criminal justice legislation considers and addresses the direct and collateral impacts on crime victims

These priorities form the basis of the legislative framework outlined below that we will continue to tirelessly work on to provide justice and a voice to crime victims. We will work to develop these concepts that were expressed by all parties involved that participated in this fact-finding mission. After listening and hearing what major concerns were brought to light, we are better able to address changes and reforms to the criminal justice system as it relates to crime victims and law enforcement.

### 1) Victims' Rights Enforcement and Notification

**Purpose:** Ensure victims receive timely notice and meaningful participation throughout criminal proceedings.

**Potential Provisions Include:**

- Standardized statewide notification requirements
- Clear assignment of agency responsibility for victim notification
- Review or remedy mechanisms when victims' rights are violated

### 2) Post Arraignment Victim Safety and Protection

**Purpose:** Address safety gaps immediately following arraignment or release.

**Potential Provisions Include:**

- Stronger standards for issuance and enforcement of orders of protection
- Enhanced notification when defendants are released or conditions change
- Review of bail and release practices for repeat or violent offenders



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## 3) Trauma Informed Victim Services Access

**Purpose:** Expand access to survivor centered, trauma informed services statewide.

**Potential Provisions Include:**

- Expanded eligibility for state supported services
- Improved funding stability for local victim assistance organizations
- Trauma informed training requirements for relevant agencies

## 4) Interagency Coordination and Data Sharing

**Purpose:** Improve coordination among law enforcement, prosecutors, courts, hospitals, and service providers.

**Potential Provisions Include:**

- Improved information sharing protocols
- Clear referral and follow up standards
- Best practice guidelines for collaborative case management

## 5) Repeat and Violent Offender Accountability

**Purpose:** Strengthen accountability while prioritizing victim safety.

**Potential Provisions Include:**

- Review of sentencing, supervision, and monitoring provisions
- Greater consideration of victim impact throughout proceedings
- Enhanced reporting on compliance with orders of protection



## 6) Sex Offender Registry Modernization and Victim Safety

**Purpose:** To modernize New York State’s Sex Offender Registration Act (SORA) framework clarifying statutory duties.

### Potential Provisions Include:

- Closing identified operational gaps
- Strengthening victim notification, inter-agency coordination, and compliance enforcement
- Establishes clear authority where statutes are currently silent or ambiguous
- Codifies practices that cannot be implemented through regulation alone
- Refine Risk Assessment - provide for scheduled risk-level reassessments incorporating updated behavior, supervision compliance and victim impact statements

### Sex Offender Registry Act Recommended Improvements:

- 1) Improve Community Notification & Victim Awareness with:**
  - Opt-In Victim Alerts to notify victims of changes to the status of the offender, such as their release, a change of address, change of supervision status or petition for risk-level modification
  - Requiring DCJS to provide “plain language explanations” so victims can more easily understand risk levels, etc.
- 2) Strengthen Supervision & Compliance Monitoring by:**
  - Increasing resources for verification & enforcement
- 3) Refine Risk Assessment & Judicial Review through:**
  - Allowing scheduled risk-level reassessments, incorporating:
    - Updated behavior, supervision compliance and victim impact statements
- 4) Close High-Risk Gaps by:**
  - Enhancing monitoring tools for high-risk offenders by expanding authority for targeted GPS monitoring for:
    - Level 3 offenders, designated sexual predators and repeat registry violators
  - Create expedited court procedures for faster consequences for willful non-compliance for:
    - Repeated failure to register, intentional falsification of information and evasion of address verification
- 5) Re-evaluation of Risk Level scoring system to better identify high-risk offenders**
- 6) Improve Victim Services & Trauma Informed Practices by:**
  - Funding SORA victim-liaison positions to:
    - Better explain registry changes, assist with safety planning and coordinate alerts and court appearances



## Conclusion

The statewide Crime Victims Roundtable series represents a critical step toward meaningful reform. By listening directly to those most impacted by crime and from professionals working throughout New York’s criminal justice system, lawmakers have developed a clear roadmap for strengthening victims’ rights, improving accountability, and advancing public safety.

Based on these findings, the roundtables identified shared reform priorities focused on improving interagency coordination, strengthening victim notification and participation, enhancing post arraignment safety protections, expanding access to victim services, and increasing accountability for repeat and violent offenders. These priorities form the basis of a coordinated legislative framework outlined in this report.

The recommendations set forth represent a balanced approach that prioritizes victim safety, fairness, and accountability while respecting due process. This report serves as a roadmap for translating lived experience into the foundation for the next phase of work—**translating these findings into legislative action that ensures victims are treated with dignity, respect, and transparency throughout the criminal justice process.**

