



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR
Thomas F. O'Mara

Senator O'Mara's weekly column 'From the Capitol' -- for the week of April 22, 2024 -- 'Syracuse tragedy continues to highlight lawlessness'

THOMAS F. O'MARA April 22, 2024

| ISSUE: **LAW AND ORDER; CRIMINAL JUSTICE**



Senator O'Mara offers his weekly perspective on many of the key challenges and issues facing the Legislature.

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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, **"Syracuse tragedy continues to highlight lawlessness"**

In a recent column, I wrote about Chemung County Sheriff's Investigator Mike Theetge who, while in pursuit of a suspect in a retail theft operation at a Target store in Big Flats, Chemung County, was struck and severely injured by the getaway vehicle being used in the crime.

Investigator Theetge is 35 years old. He suffered a skull fracture and brain bleeding. Gratefully -- thanks to his own fortitude and strength, and the incredible care and support he has received -- Investigator Theetge is steadily improving. But he and his family face a long road of recovery.

Sadly, and tragically, the ongoing spread of lawlessness throughout this state once again hit far too close to home last week when two Syracuse law enforcement officers -- Onondaga County Sheriff Lieutenant Michael Hoosock and Syracuse Police Officer Michael Jensen -- were gunned down and murdered in the line of duty on Sunday, April 14.

In the aftermath of the Syracuse tragedy, Monroe County Sheriff Todd Baxter, in words that echo the sentiment of so many throughout this region and state, said, "I'm frustrated. I'm angry. I'm hurt. Just like everybody else in Syracuse. There is what I believe is a target on the back of law enforcement. People have come to a new level of brazenness towards law enforcement and if that doesn't scare the hell out of our community, then I don't know what will."

Sheriff Baxter is right about a "a target on the back of law enforcement" and a "new level of brazenness towards law enforcement." Many believe it stems directly from the brazenness of Albany Democrat policies and a mindset that has failed to recognize -- in fact, that deliberately works against -- the need for law and order.

As I have stated many times over the past several years, the consequences are clear: a rapidly declining Empire State. Beginning under former Governor Andrew Cuomo and continuing under current Governor Hochul, working in tandem with a state Legislature under all-Democrat control, New York State's criminal justice system has been turned upside down and inside out.

Failed bail and discovery law reforms. A "Raise the Age" law (aka the Gang Recruitment Act) that removes criminal responsibility for violent 16- and 17-year-olds, thereby providing incentive for gangs to recruit and utilize younger members. A parole system that continues to outrageously release the most violent of inmates, including cop killers and child murderers. A correctional system that has become a powder keg of violence because it handcuffs administrators and correctional officers from being able to maintain control, and the inmates know it. The approval of new laws like the so-called "Clean Slate Act" facilitating a widespread sealing of *millions* of criminal records, 2.3 million records to be exact, including for any number of violent crimes including assault, armed

robbery, attempted murder, manslaughter, kidnapping, drug trafficking, and others, regardless of the number of criminal convictions an individual has.

The halls of state government are out of control and, consequently, the streets are out of control. Under the cover of a so-called “progressive” political ideology that has taken over the reins of power in Albany, this state has become less safe. Plain and simple. Statewide polling throughout the past few years confirms that New Yorkers view crime as one of the most critical issues confronting the state and that New York is moving in the wrong direction to address it.

Albany Democrats keep trying to defend a mindset for which there is no defense. They keep trying to assure the rest of us that public protections remain in place. That, somehow, the reality of their “no consequences” approach to law and order is not real.

Instead of changing their own ways, they keep trying to convince us that all we need to do to make things better is to stop believing what we keep seeing and hearing every week.

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