



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Joseph A. Griffo

A statement from Sen. Griffo commending law enforcement, calling for review of policies after Dannemora prison break

JOSEPH A. GRIFFO July 2, 2015

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Every day the two despicable inmates from the Dannemora prison facility were on the run brought yet another day of fears that the worst was yet to come from these violent and desperate individuals. Yet, more than three weeks later, it is with great relief and satisfaction that the bitter fates of these two escaped prisoners brought no further bloodshed than their own.

There was much that could have gone wrong during this manhunt. But the outstanding and professional members of our law enforcement agencies made it their mission to bring this chase to a safe conclusion, and we should all be proud and grateful that they ultimately fulfilled their duty. No matter the weather nor hardship, they never gave up. No matter the risks of scouring wooded areas where unknown dangers lurked, their courage never wavered. We thank these men and women of the law for their tireless dedication, and their assurance that our welfare will always be in good hands.

But, with this undeniable success I am also troubled by the mounting expense it cost every day to pursue these two monsters who never should have made out beyond their prison walls in the first place. This devoured real taxpayer dollars that could have been spent on more important priorities. While I appreciate that no expense must be spared at times like this, this is one expense that is difficult to accept because of the circumstances that led us to this point.

As a result of the spotlight that these prison escapes have placed on life behind bars, I believe it is time for the New York State Legislature and Executive to thoroughly review and examine how the system of corrections is handled throughout our state. We need to find out what went wrong, how it went wrong and what we can do to prevent these mistakes from ever happening again. Fortunately, escapes like this are very rare, but they still reveal

troubling circumstances that deserve to be questioned and addressed. If there is anything the State is doing administratively that increases the opportunities for such an escape, then we need to stop it now.

It is my opinion that prisoners today are being coddled in our correctional facilities, where we seem to be more concerned about the well-being of the inmates than the well-being of our dedicated corrections officers. Some of the latitudes that these two killers with such violent criminal pasts were allowed to experience should concern all of us. People like this go to prison to be punished and to suffer the consequences of their crimes, not to live day to day like they're members of a country club. We need to make sure inmates are reined in, while doing whatever we can to provide corrections officers with the proper resources, training, protections and staffing levels necessary to ensure the safest and most secure facilities.

As a member of the Senate Committee on Crime and Correction, I believe it is important and appropriate that the committee undertake a review of what happened, as well as scrutinize the current policies and regulations that are in place within our state's correctional facilities. The events leading up to the Dannemora prison break demand answers and accountability, and I urge the Legislature to join the Governor in exposing whatever might have contributed to this regrettable incident.

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