



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Malcolm Smith

Senate Democratic Leader Malcolm A. Smith Applauds New Law To Enhance Police Diversity And Recruitment

MALCOLM A. SMITH July 7, 2008

Bill sponsored by Smith considered major step in improving public trust following controversial Sean Bell Shooting

New York, NY – Tuesday, July 8, 2008 – Senate Democratic Leader Malcolm A. Smith (D-St. Albans) applauded Governor David Paterson for signing into law legislation that will enhance police officer recruitment practices while helping improve the public's trust in police and the criminal justice system.

The legislation, S. 8407, sponsored by Smith and Assemblyman Keith Wright (D-Harlem), A.564-A, requires the Municipal Police Training Council in the state Division of Criminal Justice Services to develop new procedures to enhance police officer recruitment efforts and to increase police awareness of racial, ethnic, religious, gender and other diversity issues.

"The composition of police departments across our state, in many cases, does not accurately reflect the demographic makeup of their respective communities," said Senator Smith. "This law opens new resources for police statewide when it comes to community education and sensitivity, both improving community relations and making their jobs easier. With a better understanding of diversity issues within the communities police protect and serve, officers will be better equipped to do their jobs," Smith said.

The measure is one of many identified in a June report by the Tri-Level Legislative Task Force, chaired by Senator Smith. The Task Force proposed more than a dozen initiatives to bolster community police relations in the aftermath of the 2006 fatal shooting of Sean Bell in Queens. Bell was an unarmed patron of a Queens club. He was celebrating on the morning of his wedding when he was confronted, shot and killed by police.

The Task Force consisted of elected officials at the federal, state and local levels which met for more than a year and held a series of public hearings throughout New York City. Members of the Task Force reviewed hours of testimony submitted by witnesses seeking to improve police policy and procedures.

The comprehensive report has outlined recommendations for legislative and policy changes that would modify police conduct and restore faith in police and law enforcement agencies.

Senator Smith said: "This new legislation is among many policy changes recommended in the Task Force report that will begin to reduce tensions between our communities and the police officers charged with their protection. My Senate colleagues and I will continue to work to make sure that we implement the changes necessary to restore confidence in our law enforcement and justice system and to make sure that our law enforcement officers are the best prepared and trained in the nation."

Other Tri-Level priority legislative proposals outlined in the June 8, 2008 report, include:

- Require law enforcement officials who have discharged their weapons to be tested for the presence of drugs and/or alcohol within three hours of such discharge.
- Require visual and audio recording of custodial interrogations which take place at police stations or other places of detention.
- Provide funding and technical assistance to municipal police departments for non-lethal tactics training.
- Establish a language services program in police departments.
- Legislation authorizing the State Attorney General to investigate and prosecute the

alleged

commission of any criminal offense committed by police officers in connection with performance of their official duties.

- Legislation authorizing the Division of State Police to secure and freeze the scene of

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crime when allegations of police abuse are involved.