



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Betty Little

Little: Weakened Drug Law Puts Residents At Risk

BETTY LITTLE June 1, 2009

Urges immediate repeal of Rockefeller reform provision

Senator Betty Little says a provision of the Rockefeller drug law reform adopted in this year's budget and scheduled to take effect June 8 will effectively hide the records of many drug felons from criminal background check review.

Little joined her Senate Republican colleagues at an Albany news conference today to push for immediate adoption of legislation (S.5684) to repeal the new record-sealing provision. Law enforcement officials are supporting the Republican-led effort.

If the law is left unchanged, courts could seal the criminal records of certain drug felons when they complete drug court, so there will be no record of their conviction when they apply for employment. Little said a criminal could have a total of four convictions hidden from potential employers for drug offenses and other serious crimes such as burglary, robbery, auto theft, forgery and extortion.

"Criminal background checks serve an important purpose. Diluting them in any way is bad for the public," said Little. "What immediately comes to my mind are positions of trust – day care, teachers, nursing homes. But no employer, regardless of who they employ and the type of job performed, should be denied this kind of information. They don't deserve to be left in

the dark.”

Senate Republicans plan to offer the bill as an amendment to other bills this week. Senate Republican Leader Dean Skelos raised the concern last week during the public leaders’ meeting in Albany and said he plans to ask Governor David Paterson, Majority Leader Malcolm Smith and Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver to address the issue when they meet on Wednesday.

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