



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Joseph A. Griffo

## Griffo Presses for Police Officers Protection

JOSEPH A. GRIFFO April 20, 2012

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### **Griffo Presses for Police Officers Protection**

(Albany) - Senator Joseph A. Griffo (R-C-IP, Rome) today said that he is encouraging the Assembly and the Governor to support legislation recently passed in the Senate that would provide new support for the police officers patrolling the streets of New York's communities.

Under Griffo's proposal, Senate bill 2322, New York's penal law would be amended to create the crime of aggravated harassment of a police officer, a Class E felony. This is the second consecutive year that the bill has made it through the Senate.

"Our system of laws is established to protect the foundations of our society," Griffo said. "Police officers who risk their lives every day in our cities and on our highways deserve every possible protection, and those who threaten them with disrespect, harass them and create situations that can lead to injuries deserve to pay a price for their actions."

Griffo pointed to an incident Friday in which an officer was assaulted after a traffic stop in the City of Utica. He noted that his original interest in developing a new law to safeguard police grew from an incident in 2008, there are regular reports of disobedience and threats to law enforcement officers occurring statewide.

“At a time when shocking incidents of disrespect and outright confrontation are at an all-time high, the men and women who patrol the streets of our cities deserve every possible protection we can offer them,” Griffo said. “My bill would make it a crime to take any type of physical action to try to intimidate a police officer. This is a necessary action because we can see from the rise in incidents that too many people in our society have lost the respect they need to have for a police officer. We need to make it very clear that when a police officer is performing his duty, every citizen needs to comply and that refusal to comply carries a penalty.”

“Professionally I am grateful to see this bill pass through the Senate. Our police officers have a very dangerous job and need the support of our government leaders to help make them safe,” said Utica Police Department Chief Mark Williams. “All too often persons are physically challenging police officers in the line of duty. Currently in those instances where an officer is physically attack (short of sustaining a physical injury) the lawful charge is only a violation. The consequences are way too low for the offender and it sends the wrong message to the public. Police officers are the public’s first line of defense to restore order in dangerous/chaotic situations. Citizens do not have the legal right to physically challenge the authority of an officer lawfully performing their duties. Threats, intimidation and physical force used upon our police officers not only erode respect for our criminal justice system, but also endanger the public as well.

Griffo also emphasized that this legislation is important to corrections officers. Griffo’s proposal is a felony, which means any new conviction/sentence will run consecutively with any current sentence. If it was only a misdemeanor or violation (like current laws of harassment in the 1st and 2nd Degrees), any new conviction/sentence would run

concurrently with the current sentence.

“New York’s law enforcement personnel put their lives on the line every day. We have a responsibility to support them because the men and women who walk a beat, drive a patrol car or keep our highways safe are everyday heroes who protect innocent people. I hope that this bill will be supported by all lawmakers of both parties and be signed into law so that we can add this layer of support and protection for our police officers.”

The bill is now before the Assembly, where Assemblymember Bill Magee is the sponsor of its companion legislation.