



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Lee M. Zeldin

Senate Passes the New York State Criminal Street Gang Act

LEE M. ZELDIN June 21, 2013

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ALBANY— Senator Lee M. Zeldin (R,C,I—Shirley) announced today that the State Senate passed the Criminal Street Gang Act (S. 4444-A) legislation which he sponsored along with Senator Martin Golden to take direct action to prevent criminal gang violence.

This legislation comes on the heels of an awareness campaign driven by community leaders in Brentwood and Central Islip, family members of gang violence victims and State and local officials who sought to unite communities affected by gang violence through prayer and peace rallies over the past weeks.

“The threat of gang violence in some of New York’s communities is constant and pervasive, plaguing entire communities. It jeopardizes public safety, threatens the security of our citizens and wreaks havoc on affected families,” said Senator Zeldin. “The State has an express responsibility to protect the public against such destructive criminal activity and this bill aims to do just that.”

The comprehensive legislation increases criminal penalties for individuals who participate in criminal street gang offenses, making the participation in criminal street gang activity, the acceptance of benefits or proceeds of gang activity and the solicitation or recruitment of a person for involvement in a criminal street gang, felony offenses.

Because gang recruitment often targets the most vulnerable members of our society—our children—the legislation takes a proactive approach to preventing gang violence by creating anti-crime educational programming through the State Education Department (SED). The legislation establishes a fund, which will be used by SED to develop guidelines to help educators assist students in developing the values, self-esteem, knowledge, and skills necessary to lead productive and gang-free lives. SED and the Division of Criminal Justice

(DCJS) will also develop a model gang violence curriculum to convey to students the inherent dangers associated with gang membership.

Furthermore, recognizing the high rate of recidivism plaguing gang members, the bill seeks to educate inmates on the impact of and risks associated with gang affiliation, and provides for support services in relation to the cessation of gang membership.

“Too many New York families have been shattered by gang violence. Over the past couple of weeks, I have seen, first-hand, the tremendous pain criminal gang activity can cause, not only on the family members of the victims, but to an entire community. Enough is enough,” concluded Senator Zeldin. “I am incredibly proud of the comprehensive statutory framework we have created with this legislation, and I want to thank Senator Golden for his work on this bill as well as all of the community leaders whose passion and determination helped drive its passage.”

The bill is being carried in the Assembly (A. 7983) by Assemblyman Joseph Lentol (D-North Brooklyn) and Assemblyman Phil Ramos (D-Central Islip).