



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Andrea Stewart-Cousins

Press Release: Senate Democratic Conference Announces Reforms To Criminal Justice System

ANDREA STEWART-COUSINS December 9, 2014

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Albany, NY - The Senate Democratic Conference today announced the introduction of legislation to reform the state's criminal justice system and address incidents of police-caused fatalities. This initiative was introduced following a grand jury's decision not to bring charges against a police officer who caused the death of an unarmed civilian and will implement a permanent Office of Special Investigation to review similar cases in the future. The Senate Democratic Conference also issued a call for funds to be provided in the 2015-2016

State Budget for law enforcement institutions to invest in wearable video cameras.

“The sad reality is many New Yorkers currently do not believe that all state residents are treated equally within our criminal justice system,” Democratic Conference Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins said. “ I urge my colleagues in state government to join with the Senate Democratic Conference is supporting this legislation.”

The proposed legislation would create the Office of Special Investigation to automatically investigate the death of an unarmed civilian at the hands of a police officer. Additionally, New Yorkers will be able to petition this office to take over investigations in special circumstances.

The Senate Democratic Conference also announced that it will ask Governor Cuomo to provide approximately \$75 million in the 2015-2016 Executive Budget for law enforcement agencies to purchase and utilize wearable video cameras, known as 'body cams.' These state funds would be utilized to reimburse local and state law enforcement organizations who purchase and utilize these body cameras.

“Body cameras, when utilized properly, have already been shown to help facilitate more positive interactions between law enforcement officers and the public they serve,” added Leader Stewart-Cousins. “We look forward to working with Governor Cuomo to ensure that funds are provided so public protection agencies throughout New York State are able to invest in these common sense law enforcement tools.

The initiatives advanced by Leader Stewart-Cousins and members of the Senate Democratic Conference are intended to address the grave concerns many New Yorkers feel regarding the criminal justice system and the perception that the system does not treat all New Yorkers equally. Implementing these common sense proposals will help heal the deep divisions in New York State and return the public’s trust in their law enforcement institutions.