



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Susan Serino

## SERINO FIGHTS FOR JUSTICE TO BE SERVED First Bill to Pass the Senate Authorizes Judges to Impose Consecutive Sentences

SUE SERINO May 20, 2015

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### **SERINO FIGHTS FOR JUSTICE TO BE SERVED**

#### *First Bill to Pass the Senate Authorizes Judges to Impose Consecutive Sentences*

ALBANY—Senator Sue Serino (R, C, I—Hyde Park) today announced that her first bill to pass in the Senate would authorize judges to impose consecutive sentences when two or more lives are lost as a result of a single criminal act.

“Under the current law, regardless of the number of victims killed during a single act, sentencing must run concurrently despite an opinion of a judge to the contrary,” said Senator Serino. “The result is often a punishment that fails to fit the crime, damaging the public’s trust in the law and allowing perpetrators to get off easy.”

The bill, S. 3694-A, was brought to Senator Serino in January by Richard DeSantola, whose sister Patti and brother-in-law Shawn were killed in 2012 when their family vehicle was struck in the City of Poughkeepsie by a felon actively running from police. Their two young children survived the horrific accident.

Ultimately, the perpetrator received two 6 ½ to 13 year sentences after pleading guilty to two counts of manslaughter, however under the current state law, he is allowed to serve them at the same time. The concurrent sentence allows the perpetrator to serve less jail time than is deserved, effectively watering down the punishment and robbing one lost life of the retribution it deserves.

“Even before taking office, I knew that the passage of this bill would be one of my highest priorities,” said Senator Serino in commenting on the significance of the legislation. “The Wonderlys’ story is infamous in Dutchess County and beyond—the way the law robbed them of justice is abhorrent and we have a responsibility to ensure that no other family suffers at the hands of the system the way the Wonderlys’ have.”

Speaking on behalf of the victims’ families, DeSantola said: "This action moves us a step closer to preventing future families from suffering the disappointment of seeing the person responsible for the death of their loved ones, go under-sentenced."

DeSantola continued , saying, “From the beginning of our efforts to change the archaic provision which forces concurrent sentencing on a presiding judge, excluding the possibility of consecutive sentencing, the family of my sister Patricia DeSantola -Wonderly, and brother-in-law Shawn Wonderly, have worked to correct this injustice and thereby honor their memories.

We have been joined in our efforts by many fine State representatives from both parties. Today we especially wish to thank Sen. Sue Serino, who upon election to the Senate, made introducing this important legislation, one of her first tasks. We will be forever grateful for her tireless efforts on our behalf. We call upon the Assembly to follow the Senate's lead and pass this bill ."

Senator Serino echoed that point saying, “Along with members of the Wonderlys’ family, Assemblymen Frank Skartados and Kieran Lalor have been unyielding in their fight for the passage of this bill and I commend all those involved for their dedication.”

“It’s a new year in Albany and we hope our colleagues the Assembly will put people before politics and finally pass this critical bill. Enough is enough, it’s time to fix our system.”

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