



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Michael F. Nozzolio

Senator Nozzolio Remembers Brittany Passalacqua on What Would Have Been Her Graduation Weekend

MICHAEL F. NOZZOLIO June 25, 2015

Each June, in communities throughout our nation, family and friends gather to celebrate and honor local high school graduates. The time-honored tradition sends young graduates off into the world; be it to college, trade school, the workforce or serving in our armed forces. Graduations are a time of reflection, celebration and anticipation, and hope of what the future may bring.

Sadly, one young lady from our region, and her family, were deprived of experiencing the joy of this weekend.

Brittany Passalacqua should have been among her peers graduating from Geneva High School this week, but in November 2009, she and her mother Helen Buchel were brutally murdered by a convicted felon who had been released early from prison and was still on parole when he committed the murders.

The perpetrator, John Edward Brown, had previously served just 2 ½ years of his sentence for violently assaulting his infant daughter in 2003; a fact that was unknown to Helen or her family.

Working closely with Helen's mother and Brittany's maternal grandmother, Dale Driscoll, as well as Joan Tandle, Brittany's paternal grandmother, I fought

to enact the “Domestic Violence Prevention Act – Brittany’s Law” in the State Senate earlier this year. The measure was named in Brittany's memory.

The law requires all individuals convicted of a violent felony to register with the New York State Department of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS) upon their release from prison. The registry would be accessible to the public, similar to the registry of sex offenders that the State currently has in place. In addition, this law would establish an annual registration requirement for violent offenders so that our local law enforcement agencies can monitor the whereabouts of these dangerous individuals.

Murder, manslaughter, felony assault, kidnapping, and aggravated sexual assault are examples of crimes that would be tracked using this registry. These are not harmless crimes. There are countless victims who are living with the trauma of these assaults, and in some cases, living with the death of a loved one. I believe individuals have the right to know when an individual who has been convicted of a violent crime, moves into their community. Had legislation of this nature been established, Brittany and Helen’s lives might have been saved. Brittany would not have been robbed of her childhood and she too would be putting on a cap and gown and walking across the stage with her classmates in her high school graduation class.

Brittany’s Law represents a major step forward for New Yorkers in the fight against violent crime and domestic abuse. By putting new measures in place to track violent offenders and keep our communities informed of their whereabouts, Brittany’s Law will undoubtedly save lives. As Chairman of the Senate Codes Committee and as the former Chairman of the Crime Victims, Crime and Correction Committee, I am committed to enacting tougher

sentencing laws for violent criminals, reinforcing laws to protect women and children from domestic violence, and strengthening the rights of crime victims to prevent future tragedies from occurring.

The Domestic Violence Prevention Act – Brittany’s Law has bipartisan support in the Assembly and has over 15 co-sponsors, including all of our local Assembly members. My efforts will not diminish, and I will continue to do all possible to see that this important legislation is enacted.

In a very poignant and meaningful gesture , Brittany’s Geneva High School classmates have honored her memory by donating a brick in the front entrance walkway of the Smith Opera House, the location of her Geneva High School’s graduation ceremony. The brick is engraved with Brittany's name. My thoughts and continued prayers are with Brittany’s family this week as they attend the dedication of this special remembrance by Brittany's classmates and later attend the Geneva Class of 2015 graduation ceremony to celebrate the lives of her friends and classmates.