



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Michael F. Nozzolio

SENATOR NOZZOLIO CALLS FOR RESIGNATION OF OCFS COMMISSIONER IN WAKE OF INAPPROPRIATE TAXPAYER-FUNDED "SOCIAL" AT STATE JUVENILE PRISON

MICHAEL F. NOZZOLIO June 13, 2010

State Senator Mike Nozzolio is calling for the immediate resignation of New York State Office of Children and Family Services Commissioner Gladys Carrion for sanctioning an inappropriate and illegal taxpayer-funded sex party at a juvenile prison in which at least one underage girl and a suspected prostitute were brought in to perform inappropriate sexual acts on inmates.

"There must be zero tolerance for this shocking and outrageous incident being allowed to occur," said Senator Nozzolio. "During these difficult economic times, while our hardworking taxpayers are struggling to make ends meet, it is simply unconscionable that taxpayer dollars are being wasted on outrageous, inappropriate and illegal entertainment for violent felons."

Senator Nozzolio will also be participating in a hearing at the State Capitol to further investigate the incident as a member of the Special Legislative Task Force on Reform of the New York State Juvenile Justice System.

Currently, there are three State agency investigations into the incident, which took place at an outlandish "social" for prisoners at the Goshen Secure Center in Orange County in December of 2009. Girls as young as 15 were transported into the prison to attend the dance with convicted killers and other dangerous criminals. A lap dance was videotaped by a surveillance camera and other sexual acts possibly were committed.

One prison employee said that he was ordered to drive two women invited to the dance in a State car from a street corner in Albany to Goshen and back -- a distance of 230 miles round trip.

"It is abhorrent that teenage girls-some underage -were escorted **at taxpayers' expense** into youth prisons that house convicted murderers and other violent offenders. It is equally appalling that an event like this was ever allowed to take place in a State facility, but the fact that taxpayer money was used to pay for it is simply unconscionable" said Senator Nozzolio. "We are demanding that Commissioner Carrion answer for allowing this

outrageous abuse of our State's juvenile justice system to take place."

The hearing will also investigate reports of violent youths being released prematurely into less secure settings where they have murdered and viciously assaulted community members, and of numerous attacks by youths against OCFS personnel in State facilities. Last June, 24-year-old Renee Greco, an employee at a community youth home in Lockport was brutally beaten to death by two teenage residents who had been prematurely released from more secure State facilities.

In February 2009, 23-year-old Rochester Police Officer Anthony DiPonzio was shot in the head by a juvenile who had escaped from a private residential community placement facility.

A worker at the State-operated Tryon Residential Center in Johnstown, New York suffered a stroke and died a month after he was struck in the head with a wooden club by a youth. The Task Force was formed to address a growing concern by community members, youth facility staff, and law enforcement officials that newly-implemented policies set forth by OCFS are the reason for the recent spike in youth violence. The New York State Assembly recently released a report that found OCFS workplace injury rates are among the highest of any State agency, and that Commissioner Carrion and the OCFS administration have neglected workplace safety as part of the agency's policy changes which has increasingly put staff at risk.

"The new policies at OCFS that have been implemented by Commissioner Carrion are clearly more concerned with providing luxuries to convicted criminals than protecting the staff at these facilities and taxpayer dollars. Because of the Commissioner's irresponsible and ineffective policy changes, crime rates will undoubtedly increase and the safety of our communities will be jeopardized. We must correct these dangerous mistakes before another tragedy occurs. It is clear that Commissioner Carrion must step down," concluded Senator Nozzolio.