



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Martin J. Golden

Hit and Runs

MARTIN J. GOLDEN February 20, 2013

Matthew Gary, Jason Williams, and Amjad Barakat. All three of these individuals were victims of hit and runs in Brooklyn. Matthew is currently in Long Island Hospital due to injuries. Jason and Amjad were laid to rest. In December of 2012 alone, there were over 2500 hit and runs in New York City. 2500 individuals fled the scene of the accident. Just in one month. Last year there were more than 26,000 hit and runs in New York City. 26,000 drivers hit people or property, causing damage, injuries, and in some cases loss of life, and drove off without a second thought.

It is unfathomable to many if not most of us to hit another human being, a child, a senior, a mother, and drive off without so much as a second glance. Yet every year, tens of thousands of drivers are doing it. Once has to ask the question why?

The answer, in my opinion, is clear: the current penalties for this heinous crime are far too low. We have sent a message to the residents of our state that you are better off fleeing the scene of an accident and taking the chance. This must stop today.

As noted in last week's Home Reporter & Spectator News, the New York State Senate voted to approve legislation I sponsored, S. 2503, that will increase the penalties for leaving the scene of an accident where property damage, serious personal injury or death occurs.

This bill increases the penalties for drivers who leave the scene of an accident without stopping and/or reporting it, causing property damage, from a Class A Misdemeanor to a Class E Felony. The penalty for repeat hit and run drivers, who cause property damage or personal injury, would be elevated from a Class E Felony to a Class D Felony. Drivers who flee from the scene of an accident where someone was killed would now face Class C Felony.

The New York State Assembly has yet to act on this piece of legislation, but Assemblyman Cymbowitz has sponsored it in the Assembly. I know that everyone can agree that we must act now, before another Matthew gets rushed to the hospital, or another Jason and Amjad are taken from their families.