



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Catharine Young

Senator Young Introduces Legislation Honoring Jamestown Police Department Hero K-9 Officer Mitchell

CATHARINE YOUNG January 17, 2017

| ISSUE: **PUBLIC PROTECTION, POLICE, ANIMAL ADVOCACY**



ALBANY – Recognizing the heroic actions of Jamestown Police Department K-9 Officer Mitchell, who was seriously injured apprehending a murder suspect in late November, Senator Catharine Young (R,C,I- 57th District) has introduced “[Mitchell’s Law](#),” making it a felony to injure a K-9 officer in the line of duty.

K-9 Officer Mitchell, a six-year-old German Shepherd who has been a member of the Jamestown Police Department since 2011, was grievously injured during a confrontation with suspected murderer Keith Robbins following a six-hour standoff. During the apprehension of Robbins, K-9 Officer Mitchell was stabbed in the throat and under his jaw, causing the knife to penetrate his tongue, resulting in emergency surgery for his injuries.

During a visit to Senator Young's office, Jamestown Police K-9 Officer Mitchell, handler Officer Eric Kraft, Officer Floyd Kent, and Chief of Police Harry Snellings asked Senator Young to sponsor legislation that would make it a felony for perpetrators who injure a K-9 officer in the line of duty, because the crime is currently only a misdemeanor.

"K-9 Officer Mitchell is a hero for his work assisting in the capture of a suspected murderer. His injuries were very serious and a stiffer penalty is warranted. It is a tragedy that Keith Robbins will face only minor consequences for attempting to take the life of K-9 Officer Mitchell," said Senator Young.

"Officer Mitchell, and all K-9 officers, serve a very important role in law enforcement, and their use and responsibilities are always increasing. Along with apprehending suspects, they search for drugs, explosives and missing persons. They protect the community, their handlers and other officers, and the value of their lives should be reflected in the penalty for harming police dogs, similar to assaulting a human officer. I am proud to sponsor "Mitchell's Law," enacting tough penalties for those who injure a dedicated K-9 Officer," Senator Young said.

"Police K9 units are a valuable law enforcement resource. Often these dogs are placed in dangerous situations and are injured or killed in the line of duty. In New York State, unless the animal is killed, the charge is a Class A Misdemeanor. The consequences for assaulting a police K-9 need to be harsher. I want to thank Senator Young for sponsoring this legislation

and supporting Mitchell's Law," said Chief Snellings.

"K-9 Mitchell along with all law enforcement K-9s are an integral part of the communities we serve and protect in the State of New York. These dogs are highly trained working dogs. K-9 Mitchell along with other law enforcement K-9s conduct building searches, area and/or article searches, locate drugs and bombs and offer several other helpful tactics for area departments to utilize. Mitchell is not only a great tool for our department, but a comfort to the other officers, knowing that he is there not only for the community we protect, but also their safety. As a K-9 handler, we try to exhaust every option possible to make it safe for these heroic animals, but sometimes we face the unexpected as K-9 Mitchell faced November 15, 2016. I feel that if a law enforcement K-9 is seriously injured in the line of duty, the consequences should be more serious than a misdemeanor. K-9 Mitchell did his job on that day and was seriously injured. K-9 Mitchell may have saved myself and three other officers from being killed or seriously injured that early morning. I have a heroic partner and would like to see Mitchell's Law succeed for him and all the K-9s that have been seriously injured while performing their duties," said Officer Eric Kraft.

Under current law, suspects can only be charged with a Class E felony for intentionally killing a police work dog or police work horse while such animal is performing its duties and under the supervision of a police officer. Because the wounds suffered by K-9 Officer Mitchell did not result in his death, Robbins can only receive a misdemeanor charge related to the attack.

At the time of his arrest, suspected murderer Keith Robbins had barricaded himself in a home where his father resided on Todd Avenue in Jamestown. It is believed that Keith Robbins fatally shot his estranged wife, Shari Robbins, in the parking lot of New Creation Assembly of God Church six days earlier. At the time of the murder, Sheri Robbins had an active "no contact" order of protection against Keith Robbins, according to news reports.

Less than a month after being injured, K-9 Officer Mitchell made a full recovery and was back at work with his handler, Officer Kraft.

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RELATED LEGISLATION

2017-S961

- Introduced

- - In Committee Assembly
 - In Committee Senate

- - On Floor Calendar Assembly
 - On Floor Calendar Senate

- - Passed Assembly
 - Passed Senate

- Delivered to Governor

- Signed By Governor

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Elevates killing a police work dog or police work horse from being a class E felony to a class D felony

January 05, 2017

In Assembly Committee

Sponsored by **Catharine Young**

Do you support this bill?