



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Terrence Murphy

Protecting Those Who Protect Us: Senator Murphy Co-Sponsors Legislation Designating Attacks Against First Responders As A Hate Crime

TERRENCE MURPHY January 30, 2017

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ALBANY, NY- There has been an alarming increase in mortality rates of law enforcement officers, firefighters, corrections officers and emergency medical services personnel within the past decade. Between 2015 and 2016 alone, there was a 68% increase in firearms related fatalities among law enforcement, bringing the total number of officers fatally shot in 2016 to sixty-four.

According to The National Association of Emergency Medical Technicians, four out of five medical technicians have experienced some form of injury while on the job. Approximately 52%, claimed to have been injured by assault and over 20% said personal safety was their primary concern.

To help stem the rising tide of attacks on first responders, Senator Terrence Murphy has co-sponsored the Community Heroes Protection Act (S1114A/A2962A). The legislation designates offenses against law enforcement officers, firefighters and emergency medical services personnel as hate crimes. These offenses are designated as hate crimes only if they are intentionally aimed at first responders and the penalty is based on the profile of the assailant's career.

"Firemen, police officers, our EMS techs and other first responders are on the firing line every day," Senator Murphy said. "They have been targeted not because of who they are, but because of what they are and what they represent. This legislation sends a very clear message – we will not tolerate attacks on those who protect us."

Senator Fred Akshar said, "Many families, friends, and colleagues are unjustly losing loved ones and it is our duty to offer our Community Heroes respect and to ensure their protection, just as they risk their lives every day to ensure ours."

Senator Martin J. Golden, a former New York City Police Officer, said, "Each day, our brave and dedicated law enforcement officers, firefighters, corrections officers, and medical service personnel put their lives on the line for our safety. Sadly, these same individuals are being targeted with violence simply because they wear a uniform and are an officer or a first responder. The Community Heroes Protection Act will classify these bias attacks against our law enforcement officers and first responders as hate crimes. This will allow our prosecutors and judges to ensure that an offender receives a punishment that fits this heinous crime. As

legislators, it is our obligation to help protect our law enforcement officers, firefighters, corrections officers, and medical service personnel as they perform their critical duties protecting the citizens of New York State. Although there will always be danger, I am confident that Community Heroes Protection Act will help protect New York State.”

Senator Patrick Gallivan, a former NY State Trooper and Sheriff of Erie County commented, “Police officers, firefighters and other first responders are dedicated to serving and protecting our citizens and our communities and they deserve our full support. I am deeply troubled by incidents in New York and across the country where men and women in uniform have been targeted because of who they represent, when in fact they represent all of us. By imposing stiffer penalties on those who perpetrate such crimes, we are sending a clear message that we stand with law enforcement and other emergency personnel who put their lives on the line in an effort to build safer communities for everyone.”

Assemblyman Kevin Byrne said, “As a volunteer firefighter and as someone who has both worked and volunteered as an EMT, I am extremely proud to join my colleagues in the Assembly by co-sponsoring this important piece of legislation. The fact that our first responders are being targeted because of the uniform they wear is simply unacceptable! These brave men and women put their lives at risk every day to protect us. Now we need to step up and be there for them. This legislation is a no brainer, it is non partisan, and it will offer added protection to all our first responders.”

“On behalf of over 30,000 active and retired members of the New York State Correctional Officers and Police Benevolent Association (NYSCOPBA), I would like to thank Senator Akshar and Assemblyman Abbate for their leadership in sponsoring the Community Heroes Protection Act,” said Michael B. Powers, President of NYSCOPBA. “We are honored to stand side-by-side with our fellow brothers and sisters in law enforcement and the first responders who put their lives on the line to protect our communities. Recently we have witnessed

several unjustified crimes against members of the law enforcement community for no other reason than the type of job that they perform or the uniform that they wear. Criminals who target law enforcement officers and first responders need to be held accountable for their actions. This legislation is a step in the right direction that will help ensure that our members return home safely at the end of their shifts.”

Jerry DeLuca, Executive Director of the New York State Association of Fire Chiefs said, “The mission of the New York State Association of Fire Chiefs is to educate and train firefighters and officers, so that they can stay safe while working to protect their communities. The Community Heroes Protection Act goes one step further in helping to ensure the safety of those firefighters, police officers and EMS workers who place their lives in jeopardy for the safety of the public.”

“Our firefighters and so many other first responders put their lives at risk every single day to rescue others,” said James Slevin, President of the United Firefighters Association. “To know that criminal acts – against our heroes – are on the rise is a serious concern, and we commend the Senate for introducing the Community Heroes Protection Act. This bill will help ensure that crimes targeted against our brave emergency service workers will be punishable as hate crimes.”

Recent history has dictated the necessity for legislation that would hold anyone who attacks a first responder accountable for their actions. In 2009, Mark Davis, a volunteer Emergency Medical Technician in Cape Vincent, New York, was shot and killed by a patient he was trying to help. Three years later, Webster, New York Police Lt. and volunteer firefighter Mike Chiapperini and 911 Dispatcher Tomasz Kaczowka, were killed by a gunman who ambushed the firefighters by creating a fire at his home. In a heinous act that remains a fresh, two New York Police Department officers, Wenjian Liu and Rafael Ramos, were murdered in an ambush-styled killing while they were sitting in their patrol car in 2014.

Under current law, when a person is convicted of a hate crime and the specified offense is a misdemeanor or a class C, D or E felony, the hate crime is deemed to be one category higher than the specified offense. Police officers and first responders are not included in the current definition of a hate crime.