



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Jeffrey D. Klein

## Corrections Without Protections: The Increasing Dangers Facing New York's Boldest Officers

JEFFREY D. KLEIN May 9, 2017

| ISSUE: **CORRECTION OFFICERS, PRISONS, SYNTHETIC DRUGS, SYNTHETIC MARIJUANA**



### *Independent Democratic Conference Releases Investigative Report on the Rise of Correctional Worker Assaults*

**Albany, NY** — Members of the **Independent Democratic Conference** stood with state and local correction officers and released a new report, *Corrections Without Protections: The Increasing Dangers Facing New York's Boldest Officers*, on the rising number of assaults and contraband seizures in New York's jails and prisons.

The report examined inmate assaults on officers between 2007 and 2016, and found that they had risen from a low of 524 in 2012 to a high of 896 in 2015.

“Correction officers in New York hold one of the hardest jobs imaginable. As indicated by the report we’re releasing today their jobs have only gotten more difficult. It is unacceptable to see this rise in assaults on those who are protecting us. We must ensure that dangerous drugs and other contraband are kept out of prisons so that correction officers can feel safe when they go to work every day,” **said Senator Jeff Klein (D-Bronx/Westchester).**

“Correction officers are truly unsung heroes of our criminal justice system and go too often without recognition of the work they do as they are faced with new challenges that make their work environment extremely dangerous. Additional protections proposed today will build on my legislation that requires new correction officers and staff who regularly work with inmates with mental health issues to receive at least 8 hours of mental health training related to treatment of inmates with mental disabilities. Protecting corrections officers in the face of new, more dangerous challenges is a priority for all of us.,” **said Senator David Carlucci (D-Rockland).**

“Many of our correction officers suffer from PTSD and other mental health issues after being assaulted on the job. It’s traumatic to be attacked at the workplace and we want to make sure that our officers are able to get the treatment they need through workers compensation which is why I’m introducing a bill to address this serious issue,” **said Senator Marisol Alcantara (D-Manhattan).**

Senator Alcantara’s legislation, S.5954 takes aim at the result of inmates intentionally throwing bodily fluids at correction officers, which may result in post-traumatic stress disorder. Her bill will allow officers facing impairment resulting from such an event be eligible for coverage in workers compensation claims.

“Correction officers do a tremendously difficult job and face increasing on-the-job danger everyday. Our facilities are understaffed, and flooded with contraband including K2 which can lead to dangerous behavior. We want to support our hardworking correction officers who put their lives on the line by passing legislation that enhances their safety and helps them receive mental health treatment if they need it,” **said Senator David Valesky (D-Syracuse).**

“Across New York correction officers walk the toughest beat in America. The shocking numbers in this report are likely not a surprise to any of them who face the threat of assault on a daily basis. The IDC will continue to work towards finding solutions that protect these hard working men and women,” **said Senator Diane Savino (D-SI/Brooklyn).**

“This ‘Corrections Without Protections’ report makes plain the troubling dangers correction officers confront on a daily basis. During Correctional Officers Week, we rededicate our collective efforts to standing with correction officers and NYSCOPBA to ensure safety in facilities, provide support, and Improve training. ‘New York’s Boldest’ deserve safe workplaces alongside all New York workers,” **said Senator Jesse Hamilton (D-Brooklyn).**

“Correction officers perform a difficult and dangerous job day in and day out. Every day, the job gets tougher and tougher and officers’ safety is continually put at risk. As this report shows, that level of risk is only growing with the rise of contraband and assaults in the corrections system. Our state needs to take immediate action and protect our corrections officers by passing the legislation being put forward by the IDC in this report. I proudly stand behind this legislation and the resolution proclaiming this week as Correctional Officers Week,” **said Senator Tony Avella (D-Queens).**

In addition to assaults on staff, the report also found an increase in inmate on inmate assaults, peaking in 2016 at 1,134 assaults from a low of 603 in 2009. These assaults included fights between two inmates and large-scale assaults involving over 100 inmates.

During the same period in which assaults increased, an increase in contraband seized by correctional workers was also found. These seizures include a significant rise in the amount of the synthetic drug K2 found in prisons, which is believed to cause uncontrollable inmate behavior when used. The IDC report found that since 2012 K2 confiscations jumped from just three confiscations to 1,247 in 2015. Previous reports from Senator Klein and the IDC found that the products were easily available on the internet and in neighborhood stores.

Senator Klein urged the passage of his legislation to create a state analog act to criminalize substances that are substantially similar to illegal drugs to stem the tide of their entrance into the prison system.

The injuries received from such assaults often result in workers compensation claims that cost state millions of dollars. In its report, the IDC found that the increase in workers compensation claims coincided with the increase in assaults.

From a fiscal standpoint, the amount of workers compensation claims has increased from \$16.6 million in 2011-2012 to \$19.1 million in 2015-2016, with taxpayers footing the bill.

“The IDC has long standing history of supporting our members. They recognize that correction officers have one of the toughest jobs in law enforcement and need the full support of our legislators. The report compiled by the IDC sheds light on the dangerous environment that exists inside our prisons and how essential it is to provide the necessary resources to protect the men and women who wear that uniform. The new legislation that Senator Alcantara and the IDC will be introducing is a step in the right direction and on behalf of our 20,000 dedicated members I would like to thank them for their continued support,” **stated Michael Powers, NYSCOPBA President.**

“With over 1,300 Correction Officers assaulted by inmates over the past two years and stabbings and slashings up 18%, it's not very difficult to see why the NYC DOC is engulfed in a major security crisis. Now more than ever, New York City Correction Officers need the steadfast support from our friends in the IDC, led by Coalition Leader Jeff Klein, to ensure that the nation's second-largest jail system is also the safest,” **said NYC COBA President Elias Husamudeen.**

“Having worked in Corrections for almost 30 years first as an Officer then up through the ranks to Lieutenant, and currently serving as the President of Nassau County COBA, it is refreshing and encouraging to see legislative action being undertaken to protect and support Correction Officers who literally put their lives on the line everyday in extremely stressful and dangerous environments. Legislation that includes the introduction of state of the art body scanners to help crack down on synthetic drugs and sophisticated weapons, to recognizing the need for increased staff and the expansion of Workers Compensation coverage to include mental health-related claims for our Officers who suffer from Post Traumatic Stress. Correction Officers provide a vital Public Safety essential service each and every day. They and their families deserve these protections as well as the full faith and support of the Public and our Legislative Leaders. I along with the IDC urge the Full State Legislature to act on these proposals to provide this protection for our Law Enforcement Professionals in Corrections,” **said Brian Sullivan, President, Nassau COBA.**

The release of the report coincided with the introduction of a resolution proclaiming May 7 – 13, 2017 Correctional Officers Week by Senator David Carlucci.