



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

John A. DeFrancisco

## STATE SENATE PASSES COMMUNITY HEROES PROTECTION ACT

JOHN A. DEFRANCISCO May 10, 2017

| ISSUE: **FIRST RESPONDERS, LAW ENFORCEMENT**



The New York State Senate today (5/9/17) passed the “Community Heroes Protection Act.” The bill (S1114A), sponsored by Senator Fred Akshar (R-C-I, Colesville), would make crimes explicitly committed against law enforcement and first responders punishable as hate crimes.

Senator Akshar, a former Broome County Undersheriff, said, “Despite living in a time when crimes specifically targeting first-responders are on the rise, thousands of brave men and

women across the state voluntarily put their uniforms on every day to protect and serve our communities. The passage of stiffer penalties will not single-handedly protect all of our emergency service workers but we must make it clear that targeted offenses against our Community Heroes will not be taken lightly. We will not be silent while you are selfless.”

The measure was inspired by the many brave men and women in uniform who have lost their lives, were injured, or targeted simply because of their jobs as community protectors. A recent study found that 135 law enforcement officers were killed in the line of duty in 2016, the highest total since 2011. Of those killings, 21 came in ambush-style shootings – the highest total in more than two decades.

The Community Heroes Protection Act classifies certain crimes against first responders, such as 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 based on the profile of their career.

In 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 shall be deemed to be one category higher than the specified offense or one category higher than the offense level applicable to the defendant’s conviction. Police officers and first responders are not included as victims in the current definition of a hate crime.

Senator Martin J. Golden (R-C-I, Brooklyn), a former New York City Police Officer and a cosponsor of the bill, 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 and they are being targeted with violence simply because they wear a first responder uniform. The Community Heroes Protection Act will rightly classify these bias

attacks against our law enforcement officers and first responders as hate crimes. This law will see to it that such 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, to be passed by the Senate today, will help protect New York State and that is why it is critical that the Assembly pass this legislation before the end of this session.”

Senator Patrick M. Gallivan (R-C-I, Elma), a former Erie County Sheriff and a cosponsor of the bill, said, “Every day, police officers, firefighters and other first responders put their lives on the line in order to protect our communities. Those who would target these brave men and women must be held accountable for their despicable and hateful acts. This legislation will send a clear message that we will not tolerate attacks on our community heroes and that we stand by those who serve and protect the citizens of New York.”

Senator Phil Boyle (R-C-I, Suffolk County), a cosponsor of the bill, said, “As an active volunteer firefighter and former EMT, I know first-hand how hard our law enforcement officers, firefighters, and emergency medical services personnel work to protect our communities every day. With the staggering increase of targeted attacks on our law enforcement and emergency personnel, this crucial piece of legislation shows our steadfast support for our first responders and that we'll do everything we can to protect them.”

The bill has been sent to the Assembly, where it is sponsored by Assemblyman Peter Abbate Jr. (A2962A).

The bill's expected passage today coincides with the annual Police Officers Memorial

Ceremony to recognize police officers of New York State who died in the line of duty. Forty new names were added to the New York State Police Officers Memorial's Roll of Honor this year.

In addition, the Senate passed a measure (S1980), sponsored by Senator Gallivan, that would create a State Trooper Highway Memorial Task Force to provide for the recognition of state police who have died in the line of duty.

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#### RELATED LEGISLATION

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### **2017-S1114A**

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- 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
- 

Designates offenses against law enforcement officers, firefighters and emergency medical services personnel as hate crimes

January 06, 2017

In Assembly Committee

Sponsored by Fred Akshar

Do you support this bill?