



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Joseph A. Griffo

## Griffo: Senate passes measure to punish targeted attacks on police & first responders as Hate Crimes

JOSEPH A. GRIFFO May 22, 2017

| ISSUE: **LAW ENFORCEMENT, HATE CRIME, FIRST RESPONDERS, FIREFIGHTERS**



UTICA – State Senator Joseph Griffo announced today that the New York State Senate has passed the “Community Heroes Protection Act,” which would punish as hate crimes any attacks that specifically target law enforcement and first responders.

This legislation passed in the State Senate was inspired by the many brave men and women in uniform who were killed, injured or targeted simply because of their jobs as community

protectors, like Utica Police Officer Thomas Lindsey, Senator Griffo said.

It has been 10 years since Officer Lindsey was ambushed, shot and killed during a traffic stop in April 2007 by a man who resented police. The kind of hate that fueled the attack on Officer Lindsey, and many other officers across our nation, cannot be tolerated, and therefore would be punished severely under the proposed Community Heroes Protection Act, Senator Griffo said.

Joined outside the Utica Police Department on Monday with leaders of the Utica Police Department, New Hartford Police Department, Rome Police Department and the Oneida County Sheriff's Office, Senator Griffo highlighted the importance of moving forward with this legislation on behalf of the community.

“Being a first responder is inherently a dangerous job, but that doesn't mean we shouldn't do everything in our power to protect those who risk their lives every day to protect us,” **said Senator Griffo, R-Rome.** “Targeted attacks against our police, fire and first responders are only getting worse, yet these brave men and women are as committed as ever to keeping our communities safe, no matter how much adversity they know they must confront. That exceptional courage and public service must never be denied, and I am proud to support this legislation to make clear that any hateful acts against our first responders should bring the most severe punishment.”

A **recent study** found that last year has been the deadliest year for law enforcement officers since 2011, with 135 officers killed in the line of duty in 2016. Of those killings, 21 came in ambush-style shootings – the highest total in more than two decades. The Senate's passage of this legislation came as we recently recognized National Police Week, a tragic reminder of the many officers across New York State who have died in the line of duty, including Utica Police Officer Thomas Lindsey in 2007, New Hartford Police Officer Joseph Corr in 2006 and

Oneida County Sheriff's Deputy Kurt Wyman in 2011, as well as State Troopers Andrew Sperr and Joseph Longobardo in 2006.

The “**Community Heroes Protection Act**” (**S1114A**) classifies certain crimes against first responders – such as law enforcement officers, firefighters, and emergency personnel – as hate crimes only if they are intentionally aimed at first responders based on the profile of their career. 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, a “hate crime” shall be deemed one category higher than the specified offense. Police officers and first responders, however, are not included as victims in the current definition of a hate crime.

Several representatives of local police agencies joined Senator Griffo on Monday to offer their support for this legislation.

**Utica Police Chief Mark Williams said:** “I want to personally thank Senator Griffo for supporting the Community Heroes Protection Act. Last year, we experienced a troubling increase in the number of deaths in the line of duty and ambush attacks on police officers across the nation. A startling 135 police officers made the ultimate sacrifice in the line of duty last year, the highest number of such deaths since 2011. The Utica Police Department is experiencing more and more death threats against our officers, so now more than ever we need stronger laws that protect the first responders who are bravely serving our community.”

**Oneida County Sheriff Rob Maciol said:** “Speaking on behalf of Oneida County’s Law Enforcement Community, I cannot thank Senator Griffo enough for sponsoring legislation that will deter criminals from attacking police officers simply because they are police officers. Police recruits are well aware of the dangers when they enter the career field, but being targeted for an attack just because you are Deputy, Trooper, or Police Officer is not one

of them, nor is it acceptable. I commend the Senator for yet again protecting those who protect us.”

**New Hartford Police Chief Michael Inserra said:** “I wholly support the passage of the Community Heroes Protection Act, which would make it a Hate Crime to intentionally target first responders and will result in harsher sentences for anyone found guilty of these shameful acts. Statistics last year showed a rising number of attacks against our first responders, and it is comforting to see our political leaders supporting our first responders with this proposed law.”

**Rome Police Chief Kevin Beach said:** “As our police officers and first responders face greater threats against their lives every day, we must send a very clear message that any hateful acts committed against our first responders will not be tolerated. Too many of our officers across the nation have been attacked and killed just because they were doing their duty, and we are grateful that public officials like Senator Griffo are stepping up on our behalf to ensure that anyone who specifically targets our community heroes will pay a severe price.”

It is now up to the State Assembly to stand with first responders and pass this legislation for final approval. In the Assembly, it is sponsored by Assemblyman Peter Abbate, Jr. ([A2962A](#)).

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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?