



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Joseph A. Griffo

State Senate passes series of bills to protect New York's community heroes

JOSEPH A. GRIFFO March 20, 2018

| ISSUE: **FIRST RESPONDERS**



ALBANY – State Sen. Joseph Griffo, R-Rome, announced today that the state Senate has passed several pieces of legislation today that increase protections for the state's law enforcement community, firefighters and other emergency service workers. The measures, which were supported by Sen. Griffo, are in direct response to the numerous incidents of violence directed at New York's first responders. The legislation would increase penalties for assaults or threats to police, increase safety at correctional facilities and increase benefits for those who became sick from their heroic service during the World Trade Center recovery.

The Community Heroes Protection Act (S1114A), which was cosponsored by Sen. Griffo, would make certain crimes explicitly committed against law enforcement, firefighters and first responders punishable as hate crimes. It was inspired by those who have lost their lives, were wounded or targeted specifically because of their profession as community protectors.

“Unfortunately, we live in a time where our first responders have to keep looking over their shoulders for threats simply because of what they chose to do for a career or for volunteering to help their communities,” Sen. Griffo said. “These brave men and women put their own lives on the line every day to protect our families and neighbors. We need to show our courageous first responders that we stand with them and that we thank them for selflessly serving and for keeping us safe.”

In addition, the Senate passed a variety of additional bills aimed at safeguarding New York’s law enforcement community, including:

- S1747: Helps protect retired police officers from retaliation by individuals who had been arrested by the officers when they were still on active duty. The bill makes the law consistent with the stronger criminal penalties currently in place to prevent the assault of active duty law enforcement by specifically including retired officers.
- S1984: Strengthens existing penalties by creating a new crime when a terrorist threat is made against a police officer. A person would be guilty of making a terroristic threat against a police officer when they threaten to commit or cause to be committed a specified offense against a police officer, while also demonstrating intent to intimidate or coerce the public or government actions through murder, assassination or kidnapping, while also demonstrating.
- S2125: Prohibits civilian drone use within 1,000 feet of a correctional facility. The civilian use of unmanned aerial systems, or drones, has increased exponentially in recent years. Though many are used for innocuous reasons, in August 2015, a drone dropped a package containing tobacco, marijuana and heroin into the Mansfield Correctional Institution in Ohio. By restricting drone use in the immediate vicinity of a correctional facility, this bill would help promote a safer prison environment.

- S5337: Expands the permitted use of TSA body image scanner devices in correctional facilities across the state as part of an effort to reduce a high level of inmate “slashing” violence through the use of smuggled blades. The use of the body scanners has been proven to reduce inmate slashing, but the state Commission of Correction suspended the use of the scanners in jails because the Public Health law limits use to medical purposes only – something this bill would amend.
- S6898B: Expands line of duty sick leave to include every public officer or employee who, on the job, engaged in World Trade Center rescue, recovery or cleanup activities. The expansion acknowledges that every public employee deserves benefits related to any qualifying World Trade Center illness or condition as a result of putting their lives on the line to help in any way they could following the tragic events of 9/11.
- S1302: Increases penalties for criminals who target law enforcement through vehicle vandalism. As a result of serving and protecting communities all across the state, law enforcement personnel are placed in dangerous situations on a daily basis. This bill would protect those who protect communities and serve as a deterrent to those who seek to commit such crimes.

In addition to the bills taken up today, the Senate Republican conference has been a consistent advocate for the law enforcement community throughout the state. In last year’s budget, and in response to the tragic assassinations of NYPD Officers Miosotis Familia, Wenjian Liu and Rafael Ramos, the Senate secured \$4 million to help retrofit NYPD patrol cars and command vehicles with bulletproof windows and door panels to help save the lives of law enforcement.

The Senate Republican conference has also spoken loudly and clearly in support of stronger penalties for hardened criminals. This includes a recent Senate petition drive that collected thousands of signatures calling on the state Parole Board to deny parole for cop-killer Herman Bell and last week’s call for the resignation of Parole Board members who granted the release despite Bell's politically-motivated and premeditated assassinations of two New York City police officers.

The bills will be sent to the state Assembly.

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