



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Elaine Phillips

Senator Phillips Announces Series Of Bills To Protect New York's Community Heroes Passes Senate

ELAINE PHILLIPS March 20, 2018



Senator Elaine Phillips announced that the New York State Senate recently passed several measures to increase protections for the state's law enforcement community, firefighters, and other emergency service workers, including the "Community Heroes Protection Act." The measures are in direct response to the numerous incidents of violence directed at New York's first responders, and 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.

“Thousands of men and women who have dedicated their lives to serving and protecting our communities as law enforcement officials, firefighters and emergency service workers have done so without asking for anything in return,” Senator Phillips said. “This legislation provides individuals protections from target attacks by making certain crimes committed against them punishable as hate crimes. We must continue to stand with these brave individuals who put their lives on the line each and every day.”

The Community Heroes Protection Act was inspired by those who have lost their lives, were wounded, or targeted specifically because of their profession as community protectors, such as last year’s fatal shooting of NYPD Officer Miosotis Familia. The bill, S.1114A, would make certain crimes explicitly committed against law enforcement, firefighters, and first responders punishable as hate crimes.

In addition, the Senate passed a variety of 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: Straightens 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; and

- 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.

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 Assembly.