



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Pamela Helming

## Senator Helming Backs Legislation to Protect Community Heroes

ARON ASHRAFIOUN - 518-455-2366 March 22, 2018

GENEVA – Senator Pam Helming today announced that she sponsored and voted for several pieces of legislation, including the Community Heroes Protection Act, to increase protections for the state’s law enforcement community, firefighters, and other emergency service workers. 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.

“It is deeply disturbing that law enforcement officers and first responders are increasingly coming under attack simply because of the uniform they wear. The individuals that hold these positions represent the very best in our communities. Today we sent a clear message to those who would seek to do harm to our brave first responders. We must stand by the brave men and women, who put their lives on the line each and every day to serve and protect us and keep our communities safe. I believe that we have no greater obligation than to protect our first responders and hold criminals accountable for their actions. These measures do just that,” said **Senator Pam Helming**.

The Community Heroes Protection Act was inspired by those who lost their lives, were wounded, or were targeted specifically because of their profession as community protectors, such as last year’s fatal shooting of NYPD Officer Miosotis Familia. The bill (S1114A), co-

sponsored by Senator Helming, would make certain crimes explicitly committed against law enforcement, firefighters, and first responders punishable as hate crimes.

In addition, the Senate took action on a variety of bills aimed at safeguarding New York's law enforcement community, including:

- **S1747**, protects 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.
- **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 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.

Senator Helming has been outspoken in her 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 premeditated murder of two New York City police officers.

The bills will be sent to the Assembly.

*Senator Helming represents the 54<sup>th</sup> Senate District, which consists of Seneca and Wayne Counties, parts of Cayuga and Ontario Counties, and the towns of Lansing and Webster. For more information, please visit Senator Helming's [website](#), or follow @SenatorHelming on Facebook or Twitter.*

###