



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

Ritchie Bill Requires NYS Parole Board to Consider All Testimony

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The New York State Senate has approved a bill sponsored by State Senator Patty Ritchie that would require the New York State Parole Board to not only consider the voices of victims during parole hearings, but other interested parties as well.

The bill, (S.7531-B), would require the NYS Board of Parole to consider statements made to the board by a third party, including community members or law enforcement, when considering a discretionary release on parole. This bill was prompted by a court ruling back in November of last year, which prevented the NYS Parole Board from considering dozens of

letters from law enforcement officers protesting the release of John Ruzas, a man who shot to death New York State Trooper Emerson Dillon back in 1974. Ruzas was granted parole.

“Serious and violent crimes have a wide-reaching, devastating effect on not only the victim and his or her family, but friends, neighbors, law enforcement officers and the community as a whole. Parole hearings should provide everyone whose life was impacted by a crime not only a chance to be heard, but to have that testimony mean something when the parole board is making a decision on the release of the person who committed that crime,” State Senator Patty Ritchie said.

In addition, the bill would also require the NYS Board of Parole to keep all statements made in a parole hearing confidential and for the sole use of the board in its consideration of whether or not to grant parole. Current laws only require the redacting of the name and address of the person making a statement, which often is not enough to protect the identity of the individual providing testimon

Senator Ritchie’s bill is part of a series of parole reform measures approved by the Senate Tuesday that give victims’ families and law enforcement a voice throughout the entire criminal process and ensure convicted criminals serve sentences that more accurately reflect the serious nature of their crimes. The reform measures come after a number of alarming parole-based decisions, including the release of convicted cop killer Herman Bell and the Governor signing an Executive Order allowing convicted felons out on parole the right to vote.