



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

## Keeping our Prisons Safe for All

SENATOR PATTY RITCHIE June 8, 2018

| ISSUE: **CRIME AND CORRECTION, PRISON SAFETY, PRISON VIOLENCE, CORRECTION OFFICERS**



While the risk of violence is always present in correctional facilities, it seems that in recent times that violence has escalated.

Last year, inside New York State prisons, there were 798 reported assaults on corrections staff and 1,220 assaults on inmates by other inmates statewide. In addition, officials confiscated more than 3,000 weapons and contraband items.

This winter, an inmate at the nearby Franklin Correctional Facility used a common, metal fork to stab a fellow inmate in the head. We need to change this. We need to protect our hardworking correctional officers, as well as others who work inside our prisons, and help them keep order.

It is hard to believe that after reading all of these stats, and about incidents like the one in Franklin County, that metal eating utensils—that can be easily used as weapons—are still allowed inside some of our prisons. The risk they present to correctional officers, other prison staff and inmates is tremendous. As the daughter of a now retired correctional officer and a member of the Senate's Committee on Crime, Crime Victims and Corrections, I feel this practice cannot continue.

That is why I have sponsored a bill, (S.8206), that would ban all metal eating utensils from prison cafeterias, mess halls and other dining areas of state prisons that house inmates serving time for violent and other serious crimes. Under this bill, utensils made from either plastic or a composite material would replace those that are metal.

This bill also has support from former correctional officer and current Assemblyman Billy Jones who sponsors it in the Assembly. Unfortunately, while the bill did pass a key committee recently, it was met with opposition from one single Democratic member of the committee who believed the bill 'dehumanized' inmates.

I would like to know what you think on this important issue. Please vote on my "Snap Poll" on my website on whether or not you believe inmates should have access to metal eating utensils.

I am also proud to tell you there are more efforts underway to keep our brave correctional officers safe. I have introduced legislation ([S.2949A](#)) to ensure adequate staffing in correctional facilities. The bill requires the Commissioner of the Department of Corrections and Community Supervision to establish a staffing plan for all uniformed and non-uniform personnel, and to share a copy of the plan with the Legislature for oversight.

Another bill I sponsor ([S.7525](#)), would provide the families or beneficiaries of deceased correctional and community supervision officers with the retirement pension that would have been established had the member retired on the date of his or her death. This would allow more experienced correctional and community supervision officers to stay on the job as newer, younger officers gain much-needed experience.

In addition, during the final weeks of this year's legislative session, I will continue to focus on common-sense measures to ensure our correctional officers and others who work inside our state's prisons are safe while on the job. Hardworking New Yorkers want and deserve safer prisons.

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#### RELATED LEGISLATION

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### **2017-S8206**

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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

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Relates to providing plastic or composite eating utensils at state correctional facilities

April 18, 2018

In Senate Committee [Finance](#)

Sponsored by [Patty Ritchie](#)

Do you support this bill?

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## 2017-S2949A

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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

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Requires adequate staffing at correctional facilities

January 18, 2017

In Senate Committee [Finance](#)

Sponsored by [Patty Ritchie](#)

Do you support this bill?

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## 2017-S7525

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- Introduced
- ○ In Committee Assembly
  - In Committee Senate

- ○ On Floor Calendar Assembly
  - On Floor Calendar Senate

- ○ Passed Assembly
  - Passed Senate

- Vetoed By Governor

- Signed By Governor

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Relates to death benefits for certain members under the jurisdiction of the department of corrections and community supervision

January 19, 2018

Vetoed

Sponsored by **Patty Ritchie**

Do you support this bill?