



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Elaine Phillips

'Voting' Pardons Could Let Hundreds Of Sex Offenders In Schools On Election Day

ELAINE PHILLIPS June 20, 2018



Hundreds of child rapists and sex offenders, including high risk offenders who are deemed a “threat to public safety,” those with long rap sheets and some with victims as young as two years old, were included among those pardoned by the Governor last month and could be headed to school polling places to vote this fall.

While it’s impossible to know the exact number, since the Governor has not released names of the 24,086 felons issued pardons, a painstaking comparison of the state’s “Megan’s Law”

registry with a public database of parolees in just two Senate Districts on Long Island and in Western New York exposed dozens of sex offenders receiving the extraordinary pardons. The research found at least four sex offenders, including a child rapist who has been classified “high risk of repeat offense and a threat to public safety,” in the 7th Senate District represented by Senator Elaine Phillips.

“Giving pardons to sex offenders so they can show up at school polling places on Election Day is like handing out hall passes to some of society’s most dangerous individuals,” said Senator Phillips. “Sex offenders are listed in the Megan’s Law registry because they are judged to pose a risk to children and society in general, so it makes no sense to give them the temptation to enter and remain in a school, ostensibly to cast a vote on Election Day. We need the Governor to act immediately to reverse this decision, and to immediately tells us his plan to keep our children safe.”

Half of the polling sites in Senator Phillips’ Senate District are located in schools. Polling inspectors generally can’t ask voters for identification, so it’s unlikely they would know a voter is listed on the registry. Being listed on the registry as a sex offender also is not among six approved reasons—such as being absent from the county or a resident of a nursing home—a voter can cite for the need to vote by mail using an absentee ballot.

Senator Phillips has called on state officials to:

STOP ISSUING VOTING PARDONS TO SEX OFFENDERS AND VIOLENT FELONS

More than half of current parolees are under sentence for committing violent felonies, including sex offenses, and the Megan’s Law registry includes 25,000 sex offenders who are required to register for life. The Governor has announced that he will issue pardons monthly

through the elections in November.

RELEASE THE NAMES OF FELONS ALREADY PARDONED

State law requires the Governor to release the names of offenders who receive pardons.

While he has released the total number in the initial round of pardons—24,086—the Governor has not released their names or any information about crimes for which they were convicted and sentenced.

PROVIDE NOTICE AND FUNDING TO SCHOOLS AND LAW ENFORCEMENT

Individuals on the sex offender registry are required by law to notify local police if they change their residence and certain other information. This information is typically shared with impacted communities through the state's NY-Alert emergency alert system. The Governor should provide information to schools and community members about pardons he has issued to sex offenders and other violent felons, as well as funding for increased security to keep offenders away from schools on Election Day.

DISCLOSE PARDON AND SCREENING CRITERIA

After announcing his intention to issue pardons to convicted felons on April 12, the Governor concluded just 26 work days later, on May 22, that 24,086 were eligible. Assuming that no felon's pardon was rejected, that equates to an astonishingly efficient 926.4 offender reviews per day. The Governor needs to disclose the criteria that the administration is using to evaluate and make pardon determinations.

REVEAL PROACTIVE STEPS TAKEN TO KEEP SEX OFFENDERS FROM SCHOOLS

The Governor must disclose steps his administration is preparing to take to prevent sex offenders from attempting to enter and remain in open school buildings on Election Day.

Senator Phillips has shared information about local sex offenders who received pardons with local law enforcement authorities.

Links to sex offenders and parolees:

Sex offenders:

http://www.criminaljustice.ny.gov/SomsSUBDirectory/search_index.jsp

Parolee lookup:

<http://www.doccs.ny.gov/ParoleeLookup/Lookup.aspx>