



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Fred Akshar

## 6.21.18 - Senator Fred Akshar: 'Voting' pardons could allow hundreds of violent sex offenders into New York schools on Election Day

FRED AKSHAR June 21, 2018

| ISSUE: **SEX OFFENDERS, PAROLE TRANSPARENCY, VOTING**



Hundreds of child rapists and sex offenders, including high risk, violent 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 three Senate Districts in the Southern Tier, Long Island and in Western New York exposed dozens of sex offenders receiving the extraordinary pardons.

The research found at least 10 high-level sex offenders, including multiple child rapists and sexually violent offenders in the 52nd Senate District who received pardons. All of their victims were minors, some as young as 5 years old.

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*Senator Fred Akshar said, “Giving pardons to violent sex offenders on parole and allowing them to show up at school polling places on Election Day is unconscionable, irresponsible and horrifying. We have a sex offender registry because these individuals have been found to pose a risk to our communities. Why are we incentivizing them to enter polling places like schools to cast their vote on Election Day? When the Governor handed out these pardons to over 24,000 parolees who haven't finished paying their debt to society, either he didn't think about the unintended consequences or he valued scoring political points over putting our state's children in danger. Neither answer is acceptable to the families across New York. We need the Governor to think before he acts, put people before politics and put in place a plan to fix this immediately.”*

A number of polling sites in Akshar’s Senate District are located in local 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 Akshar is joining his colleagues across the state in calling 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 Akshar has shared information about local sex offenders who received pardons with local law enforcement authorities.