



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

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Sounding The Siren To Keep Our Communities Safe: Criminal Justice Reform Must Be Done Right

JOHN J. FLANAGAN March 6, 2019

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Members of the Senate Republican Conference were joined today by a bipartisan group of district attorneys and county sheriffs to highlight proposed changes to state law that would tilt the scales of justice towards criminals and away from the law-abiding New Yorkers they are sworn to protect and serve. Also joining the group of lawmakers and law enforcement officials were crime victims' families and advocates, who told heart-wrenching stories that

reinforce the need for a better and more comprehensive criminal justice reform plan.

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“It would be an understatement to say that I am disappointed in my Senate Democrat colleagues for trying to pass these controversial measures without so much as a single hearing or debate. The truth is the Majority in this chamber has been at the will of radical political interests since the first day of session, and these so-called criminal justice “reforms” are just the latest example. I proudly stand with bipartisan law enforcement officials and crime victims’ families from all across our great state because we must do right by them first. We must keep New York safe,” said Senate Republican Leader John Flanagan.

“We all want equal justice under the law and we should work for reforms to accomplish that goal, but what the Senate Majority wants to do here would tip the scales completely out of balance in favor of criminals and to the detriment of public safety. With these so-called ‘criminal justice reform’ proposals, our colleagues are handcuffing victims, law enforcement officials and prosecutors instead of handcuffing those criminals who commit crimes against law-abiding citizens! The Senate and Assembly should be passing legislation to protect victims, get fair hearings for the accused, enhance public safety, and not handing out get-out-of-jail-free cards as a reward for law-breaking,” said Senator Jim Tedisco.

“As someone who has spent much of my career in law enforcement, I am very concerned about the criminal justice reforms being proposed by members of the Senate Majority. We have a responsibility to law-abiding citizens across New York to ensure that we will do all we can to keep our communities safe by holding perpetrators of violent crime responsible for their actions. We must also commit to supporting crime victims and the men and women of law enforcement who work hard every day to serve and protect our state,” said Senator Patrick M. Gallivan, a former Sheriff of Erie County and Commissioner on the State Parole

Board.

“The Senate Democrats continue to charge blindly ahead with their misguided agenda without any concern for the unintended consequences on law-abiding citizens and their families. Protecting the rights and safety of victims of crime should always take priority over the perpetrators of crime, but the Senate Democrats clearly have different values and priorities from everyday New Yorkers,” said Senator Fred Akshar, Ranking Member on the Senate Crime Victims, Crime, and Corrections Committee, and former Undersheriff for Broome County.

“As a former prosecutor I continue to make sure that the laws of our state promote public safety and protect the rights of victims and their families. We must also safeguard the constitutional due process protections afforded the criminally accused which are the hallmarks of our American criminal justice system. However, the extreme bail and criminal law legislation being advanced by the democrats will do neither, and will instead lead to more crime making New York less safe for everyone,” said Senator Andrew Lanza, Ranking Member of the Senate Committee on Codes, and former Assistant District Attorney in the Manhattan DA’s office.

Senate Democrat-sponsored criminal justice “reform” proposals include:

- “Cashless Bail,” a measure that could allow violent offenders to be released without serious consequences and to potentially commit more crimes, ignoring the real concerns of law enforcement officials and crime victims. Another serious worry of public stakeholders is the potential increase in flight risk; and
- “Criminal Discovery Reform,” a measure that would require all evidence to be turned over to defendants within 15 days, including who witnesses are and where they live. This

proposal could lead to an uptick in witness intimidation and tampering, endangerment of law enforcement officials, and even compromise successful prosecutions. It would also create an unfair, unfunded mandate on local governments.

These proposed changes are just the latest indication that many Albany politicians are more committed to protecting the rights of criminals than those of law-abiding citizens. Recent examples include:

- Voting rights restored for 36,000 felons, including rapists and murderers who haven't yet completed their sentences;
- Multiple cop killers set free due to a tainted parole board and inaction on the part of Albany Democrats;
- Legislation advanced to provide an increase in the minimum wage for inmates currently serving time in prison for their crimes while law-abiding middle-class New York families are fleeing the state in droves; and
- Legislation advanced to allow convicted felons to serve on juries, which potentially means that a violent offender could decide the fate of another violent offender.

In past years, Senate Republicans have passed multiple measures to reform the criminal justice system, but the Assembly and the Governor never acted on them, and Senate Democrats are currently stifling the proposals. Common-sense solutions that should be apart of any comprehensive criminal justice reform package include:

- Tougher penalties for repeat violent criminal offenders;
- More resources for Upstate and Long Island communities where crime is a serious and growing problem;

- Tougher enforcement tools to use on major drug dealers and traffickers who are targeting children and other vulnerable citizens with heroin and other illegal substances; and
- Parole reform legislation that puts crime victims and their families first.