



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

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Criminal Justice Reform Must be Done Right

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There has been a lot of talk in Albany about the need to reform New York's criminal justice system. Indeed, an important part of our legislative process is to evaluate our laws, policies and procedures, and when necessary, update them. I welcome debate and discussion aimed at ensuring our criminal justice system is fair, effective and efficient.

However, as someone who has spent much of my career in law enforcement, I am very concerned about the type of criminal justice reforms being proposed by some of my colleagues in Albany. The focus seems to be on tilting the scales of justice away from law-

abiding citizens and crime victims.

Among the changes under consideration by those who make up the new majority in the State Senate is cashless bail, a measure that could allow violent offenders to be released without posting bail to potentially commit more crimes or flee prosecution. Another proposal would be changing the criminal discovery rules, which could lead to an uptick in witness intimidation and further endanger our communities.

These proposed changes are just the latest in what appears to be an effort by many in state government to expand the rights of criminals. Some of the changes have been imposed by Executive Order issued by the governor, a procedure that I consider inappropriate because it pre-empts the legislative process. Recent examples include the restoration of voting rights for 36,000 felons, including rapists and murders who have not yet completed their sentences, and the unjust release of multiple cop killers by members of the NYS Board of Parole. We have also seen the advancement of legislation to increase the minimum wage for inmates currently serving time and to allow convicted felons to serve on juries, which potentially means that a violent offender could decide the fate of another violent offender.

A comprehensive criminal justice reform package should be balanced and include tougher penalties for repeat violent offenders, more resources for upstate communities where crime is a serious problem, tougher enforcement of laws that target major drug dealers and parole reform legislation that puts crime victims first.

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.

I look forward to working with my colleagues in the Senate to review our criminal justice system and to develop common-sense reforms that are fair for everyone.