



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Joseph A. Griffo

Griffo: Bail reform poses a real risk to public safety

JOSEPH A. GRIFFO January 21, 2020



UTICA – At a news conference today, New York State Senate Deputy Minority Leader Joseph Griffo, R-I-C-Rome, and members of law enforcement continued to push for changes to the bail reform that went into effect statewide Jan 1. Joining the Deputy Minority Leader and officers were area residents who have serious concerns with how the bail-related changes could affect them and their families.

“When this so-called reform was first proposed, I, along with law enforcement, district attorneys, crime victims and other stakeholders, warned about what will happen if these

changes go into effect,” Deputy Minority Leader Griffo said. “Unfortunately, we were right. So far we’ve seen a person charged with manslaughter, the driver in a fatal hit and run and a drunk driver in an accident that killed a pedestrian all set free without paying bail. That’s only a few of the highest profile cases, and only since the beginning of the year. Frankly, the amount of dangerous individuals set free through these reforms is terrifying and I believe poses a real risk to public safety.”

Deputy Minority Leader Griffo also was critical of several Democratic state Senators who initially supported the new bail law when they passed it as part of the State Budget who are now calling for changes despite voting against an amendment to do so on the second day of this year's legislative session.

“These Senators knew full well what this bail reform would do to our state when they advocated for it during last year’s legislative session,” Deputy Minority Leader Griffo said. “The fact that they now want to see changes is lip service in an attempt to appear that they are listening to their constituents. The motivation of these Senators is more centered on their own political future than the safety of their communities.”

When they should be taking action to address serious flaws with bail reform, downstate Democrats are instead going further and are advocating for so-called “Elder Parole” legislation.

“If approved, this dangerous expansion of the bail law would allow hardened criminals serving time in prison to be automatically granted a parole release hearing once they reach the age of 55, regardless of how much time remains on their sentence or what crime they have committed,” Deputy Minority Leader Griffo said. “This means that individuals like serial killer David Berkowitz, otherwise known as ‘Son of Sam,’ could be back out on the streets.”

In the meantime, Deputy Minority Leader Griffo continues to call for the repeal of the new bail reform law. He also supports Senate Bill (S6861), which allows courts to make an appropriate risk assessment based upon an individual's previous criminal history. Judges do not have such discretion under the law that went into effect at the beginning of the year.