



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

George M. Borrello

Repeal Bail Reform Task Force Visits Hudson Valley

GEORGE M. BORRELLO March 9, 2020

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POUGHKEEPSIE, NY—As Albany continues to ignore the voices of concerned citizens, members of law enforcement and victims' advocates, the 'Repeal Bail Reform Task Force' convened the second in a series of statewide roundtable events aimed at highlighting the impact the drastic changes are having on local communities. Held in Poughkeepsie, the roundtable brought together members of law enforcement, victims' advocates, first responders, and local government officials to share their experiences in grappling with the new measures.

Senator Sue Serino, who hosted the event, said, "When these new measures were jammed through last year's state budget, the voices of law enforcement, victims' advocates, and first responders—those who work to keep our communities safe—were ignored. As Albany continues to negotiate behind closed doors on this critical topic, this event was an important opportunity for those on the front lines to make their concerns known. Public safety must always be our top priority, and right now, the state is failing on this front. New York needs to hit the pause button on these new measures, take these concerns seriously and go back to the drawing board."

"More than two months have passed since the reckless bail reform changes took effect in New York. In that time, the toll on our state's public safety, crime victims and law enforcement communities has continued to escalate. Every day that passes without action on this issue is another lost opportunity to stem the flow of criminals that judges are being forced to release onto our streets, against their better judgment and all commonsense. It is imperative that we listen to those on the front lines of our criminal justice system whose voices were ignored when this irresponsible legislation was passed last year. Their voices must be heard," said Senator George Borrello, 57th Senate District.

"We continue to hear from the law enforcement community, prosecutors and crime victims that the bail reforms imposed earlier this year goes too far. I recognize the need for responsible criminal justice reforms, but these changes jeopardize the safety of law-abiding citizens and prohibit judges from using their discretion when deciding whether to release a potentially dangerous individual. Public safety must be our first consideration." Senator Patrick M. Gallivan, 59th Senate District.

The 'Repeal Bail Reform Task Force,' chaired by Senator George Borrello and co-chaired by Senators Patrick Gallivan and Sue Serino, was created in response to the overwhelming public outcry against the new law, which was forced through the budget process last year.

The effect of the reforms was to make 90% of crimes result in mandatory release, including manslaughter, vehicular manslaughter, violent assault, and burglary. Not a single public hearing was held before the sweeping changes to the state's criminal justice system were passed. Additionally, local municipalities, law enforcement, victims' services agencies and district attorneys were not given any additional funding to implement the new changes.

This roundtable comes on the heels of a major announcement by the NYPD who found that major crime is up 22.5% this February in New York City compared to a year ago. At a press conference where the statistics were released, speakers—including Mayor Bill de Blasio—acknowledged that the crime spike is directly correlated to the changes in state law. At today's roundtable, District Attorney Association of New York (DAASNY) President and Orange County DA, David Hoovler, brought the point home by highlighting statistics from the Hudson Valley. He noted that compared to 2019, the cities of Kingston, Middletown, Newburgh, and Poughkeepsie have collectively seen a 79% increase in motor vehicle thefts, 48% increase in aggravated assaults, and a 42% increase in robberies since the start of the year.

While it has been widely reported that both the Governor and Senate Democrats are now considering changes to the sweeping new laws, to date, negotiations have happened behind closed doors and details of any proposed changes have not been released publicly.

The goal of the task force is to give a public platform to those who were shut out of the initial discussions that resulted in these changes. Members of the task force are traveling the state to hear directly from those most impacted by these radical changes – prosecutors, law enforcement officers, probation officials, first responders, victims and victims' advocates and community residents. Additional Task Force hearings will be scheduled and announced shortly for Long Island and Syracuse.

A video of the roundtable event will be made available online at borrello.nysenate.gov.