



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Anna M. Kaplan

## Why I Voted to Repeal 50a, The New York Law that Weakens Our Communities and Makes us Less Safe

SENATOR ANNA M. KAPLAN June 8, 2020

| ISSUE: [REPEAL 50-A](#), [PUBLIC PROTECTION](#), [PUBLIC SAFETY](#), [LAW ENFORCEMENT](#)



For many years, the New York State Senate was known as the place where good legislation went to languish and die. The prior Senate Majority had neither the courage nor the appetite to take on issues of any controversy, opting instead to sweep it under the rug for someone else to clean up later.

I was sent to Albany along with a new majority because the people of Nassau County and all of New York were tired of their representatives always kicking the can down the road on tough issues, and so for the last 18 months, we have forged forward and taken on a significant number of important and complex issues with far-reaching implications for our district and the entire state.

My approach to every one of these votes is always the same. I always put policy above politics, and I always evaluate the full impact of legislation, considering all the consequences of my actions. In undertaking an exhaustive review of Civil Rights Law 50-a, speaking with the people I represent, and bearing witness to the pain of an entire community that has suffered generations of injustice, the time has come to right a wrong that has existed for too long.

I came to this country as a 13 year old girl fleeing the revolution that had overtaken the only home I had ever known because my family, and people like us, were no longer welcome or safe in our own communities. While I can't compare my experience to that of African Americans living in this country, the emotions on display in recent protests throughout our community resonate with me in a deeply personal way. Being raised in that environment also gave me a profound appreciation for our country's founding principles that we are all equal in the eyes of the law and none of us are above it, and that all public officials be transparent and accountable to the public they serve.

When 50-a was enacted decades ago, it carved out our Police and a select few public servants from the same rules and responsibilities that all who serve the public in New York State are accountable to, myself included as an elected official. We place an enormous amount of trust in our law enforcement community to wield enormous power on our behalf, but the public is right to demand an ability to "trust, but verify." Doing so isn't an attack on the good work of the vast majority of our law enforcement community who puts on a uniform every day to

protect and serve with honor and courage, and who as Senator, I have supported repeatedly through legislation and other efforts. It also doesn't need to come at the cost of the safety or privacy of our law enforcement communities or their families, and reform will make sure that private, personal information is kept private and personal. By fixing this broken rule, we're only sending a message that all public servants are accountable to the people, and none of us is above the law.

With tensions in many communities beyond the breaking point, now is the time to take meaningful steps to develop a durable relationship of trust between law enforcement and the communities they serve, and the only way we do that is by being open and honest with each other. I believe by repealing 50-a, we are taking that first step together towards a safer community for everyone.

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#### RELATED LEGISLATION

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### **2019-S8496**

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- Introduced
- - In Committee Assembly
  - In Committee Senate
- - On Floor Calendar Assembly
  - On Floor Calendar Senate

- ○ Passed Assembly
  - Passed Senate
- Delivered to Governor
- Signed By Governor
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Relates to the disclosure of law enforcement disciplinary records; and to repeal section 50-a of the civil rights law relating thereto

June 06, 2020

Signed by Governor

Sponsored by [Jamaal T. Bailey](#)

Do you support this bill?