



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Thomas F. O'Mara

Senator O'Mara's weekly column 'From the Capitol' ~ for the week of July 26, 2021 ~ 'Strengthening public safety must be a priority'

THOMAS F. O'MARA July 26, 2021

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Safeguarding crime victims is another critical part of an ongoing criminal justice agenda geared towards restoring commonsense and strengthening public safety in New York.

Senator O'Mara offers his weekly perspective on many of the key challenges and issues facing the Legislature, as well as on legislative actions, local initiatives, state programs and policies, and more. Stop back every Monday for Senator O'Mara's latest column...

This week, "Strengthening public safety must be a priority"

The state Senate Republican conference recently unveiled a comprehensive package of legislation aimed at protecting crime victims.

It follows our efforts throughout the past year to push back against the rise of violent crimes and increasing criminal activity in cities and communities throughout New York resulting, in our view, from an overall pro-criminal, anti-police climate fostered under all-Democrat rule in state government – and actions still being pursued by Governor Andrew Cuomo and the Legislature’s Democrat majorities.

We’re not alone in our alarm.

Take, for example, Albany County District Attorney David Soares, a Democrat and former head of the District Attorneys Association of the State of New York, who recently wrote, “It was barely two years ago when Cuomo signed into law sweeping criminal-justice reforms that have transformed the state’s public safety landscape – for the worse. At the time, law enforcement professionals, led by the District Attorneys Association of the State of New York, warned that the reforms would lead to rising crime and a surge of gun violence. As DAASNY’s then-president, I cautioned that the ‘reckless and irresponsible’ legislation would come back to haunt us. But the pleas of those of us who have spent our lives fighting crime fell upon deaf ears; the reformers and their media allies framed us as ‘fear mongers’ and hidebound enemies of progress.”

District Attorney Soares goes on to target New York’s misguided bail and discovery reform enacted by Cuomo and the Legislature’s Democrat majorities in 2019.

“In 48 other states,” he wrote in an opinion piece for the *New York Post*, “judges have discretion to consider danger to the community in setting bail. In New York, they are absolutely forbidden to do so.” He concludes that “one common-sense step stands out: New York must give judges discretion to keep dangerous offenders in jail.”

Keep in mind these words from DA Soares, “The pleas of those of us who have spent our lives fighting crime fell upon deaf ears.”

They fell upon the deaf ears of Governor Cuomo and they fell upon the deaf ears of the Democrat leaders of the state Senate and Assembly.

I can tell you, however, that they have been heard loud and clear by me and my colleagues in the Senate and Assembly Republican conferences. We heard them two years ago when this so-called progressive madness began spinning out of control, and we hear them to this very moment. Our conferences have, in fact, called upon the state to undertake and release a full examination and

study, based upon the available data, of bail reform’s impact on public safety and rising crime statewide. It’s a move recently backed by the New York State Association of Chiefs of Police and the New York State Sheriffs Association.

The Senate GOP “Victims’ Justice Agenda” adds to our ongoing efforts to strengthen protections for law enforcement and first responders through a “Protect Those Who Protect Us” package of legislation. We have also advanced a series of Parole Reform measures recognizing the dangers of an out-of-control state Parole Board that continues to release cop killers, child murderers, and other violent inmates back into society – as well as Democrat legislation on the table that seeks to pave the way for the release of more and more incarcerated violent criminals.

Our message is straightforward: Enough is enough. We need to stand up, speak out, and fight against the pro-criminal, anti-police mentality and policies that keep going too far in New York State.

Governor Cuomo and the Democrat supermajorities in control of the State Legislature show absolutely no signs of letting up in their push for a far-left agenda that only stands to embolden society’s criminal element and, therefore, will keep making this state and our communities less safe.

We need to enact legislation that puts crime victims and community safety first.

In fact, safeguarding crime victims is another critical part of an ongoing criminal justice agenda geared towards restoring commonsense and strengthening public safety in New York.

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