

## **NYSCOPBA Applauds Community Heroes Protection Act**

Albany, NY – I had the opportunity to attend a press conference at the Capitol on Monday, January 30, 2017, where Senators Fred Akshar, Martin Golden and Patrick Gallivan announced the Community Heroes Protection Act which would designate crimes that specifically target police, correction officers, firefighters and other emergency service workers as hate crimes.

The Community Heroes Protection Act was inspired by the many brave men and women in uniform who have lost their lives, were injured or targeted simply because of their jobs as protectors of the community. Researchers have found that between 2015 and 2016 there was a 68% increase in firearms related fatalities among law enforcement. Certainly, we know ourselves that assaults on our members have skyrocketed over the last five years and our prisons and forensic psychiatric centers are not getting any safer.

The proposed legislation classifies all crimes against first responders, such as law enforcement officers, firefighters, correction officers, peace officers and emergency medical services personnel as hate crimes. These offenses are designated as hate crimes only if they are intentionally aimed at first responders based on the profile of their career.

I was proud to stand side-by-side with our fellow Brothers and Sisters in law enforcement and the first responders who put their lives on the line to protect our communities. The supporters of this bill recognize the dangerous environment you work in every day and this measure, if passed, is one step in the right direction towards holding any inmate that targets you because of your profession criminally accountable. If passed, it should allow prosecutors in the counties across the state to charge inmates that target our membership.

Senator Patrick Gallivan, who co-sponsored the legislation and is a long supporter of NYSCOPBA stated, "I am deeply troubled by incidents in New York and across the country where men and women in uniform have been targeted because of who they represent when, in fact, they represent all of us. By imposing stiffer penalties on those who perpetrate such crimes, we are sending a clear message that we stand with law enforcement and other emergency personnel who put their lives on the line in an effort to build safer communities for everyone."

We are committed to supporting legislation that recognizes the dangers of your profession and the continued dedication and professionalism each and every one of you show the citizens of New York.

I have also reached out to the Correctional Officers Association of Delaware on behalf of our 20,000 members to offer our support to their membership and express our condolences for the tragedy that occurred in the past 24 hours. What occurred at the James T. Vaughn Correctional Center is a prime example of the extreme danger correctional officers face across this country and how quickly the environment can become volatile.

Our thoughts and prayers go out to the family of the deceased officer as well as all their members.

Respectfully,

Michael Powers  
President

