



# News From Assemblyman **PHIL PALMESANO**

132<sup>nd</sup> Assembly District



For Release: Immediately, March 29, 2017  
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## **PALMESANO, FINCH AND GIGLIO DECRY VIOLENCE AGAINST CORRECTION OFFICERS**

*The legislators call for needed state funding to make prisons safer for officers, inmates*

Assembly Republicans serving on the New York State Assembly Committee on Corrections are frustrated and angered by a continued spree of assaults on correction officers, including the recent brutal attack at Five Points Correctional Facility that left an officer hospitalized with a facial fracture and a separated shoulder.

Assemblymen Phil Palmesano (R,C,I-Corning), Gary Finch (R,C,I-Springport) and Ranking Member Joe Giglio (R,C,I-Gowanda) noted that the administration has closed facilities, trimmed staffing and championed budget cuts for state prisons. Palmesano said the resulting overcrowding and understaffing has created a work environment of escalating danger for correction officers.

“This budget needs to provide correction officers with the tools and resources they need to protect themselves and inmates pursuing rehabilitation from violent prisoners. That means increasing staffing levels, ending dangerous double-bunking and double-celling practices, and having enough facilities to house our prison population safely. We aren’t achieving any of those objectives right now, and they are all imperative,” said the lawmakers.

The legislators are alarmed by rising assault rates corresponding with facility closures that began in 2009 and continued until 2014.

Gov. Cuomo has closed 13 facilities during his tenure. “I’m going to go down in the history books as the governor who closed the most prisons in the history of the State of New York and I am proud of it,” he announced last year.

Fitting the prison population into 13 fewer facilities has created a pressure-cooker environment. There were 760 assaults on correction officers last year, up 45 percent from 2012.

“These numbers are simply unacceptable. These brave men and women are on the front lines of public safety. Their job is inherently dangerous. As a society, it is unconscionable that we would make their job even more hazardous because we weren’t willing to provide them with

needed resources. It starts with the governor, but it requires lawmakers to make this a priority. We continue making this case to our colleagues,” said the legislators.

In his Executive Budget, the governor proposed slashing visitation hours at maximum security prisons in an effort to cut 39 positions. Both houses of the legislature rejected the misguided provision in their own budget resolutions. The proposal would further jeopardize the safety of inmates and correction officers.

Palmesano, Finch and Giglio said that lawmakers who are pushing for criminal justice reforms that benefit convicted felons should be mindful of the law enforcement officials who put their lives on the line to keep people safe.

“Certainly, we want a criminal justice system that is fair. What we can’t do is focus solely on criminals and ignore the pursuit of justice for brave New Yorkers on the front lines of law enforcement.”

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