

Brothers and Sisters,

On behalf of the NYSCOPBA Executive Board, I'd like to provide you with a Legislative update detailing our efforts over the first two months of 2019.

As you know, the political world in Albany has changed, making for a very complex landscape by which to navigate. We find ourselves having to educate many newly elected officials on the true nature and hazards of our jobs. We have spent countless hours doing just that and have successfully divided some of the Senate Majority's members on key issues like "HALT" as a direct result of our advocacy. Our fight is just beginning, however. And we will need full participation from the entire Union if we are truly going to make an impact.

As a result of the changing landscape in Albany, unfortunately we oftentimes find ourselves in a very precarious position. We can't simply blast those who are against us on one issue because we might need them on another issue. We will continue to fight for our members' safety and security; while at the same time seek to develop relationships with those newly elected legislators who will stand up for our membership and reinforce those relationships we've had for years with many members of the Senate and Assembly.

Now that I've set the stage, let me expand upon a few issues that we are actively engaged on.

As things currently stand, both the Senate and the Assembly are strongly considering passing HALT. With prison violence rates at their highest to date, NYSCOPBA is sounding the alarm to the Legislature that this is certainly not the time to be removing one of the few disciplinary actions Correctional Officers currently have at their disposal. To date, we have stalled efforts to push through the legislation and have been successful in our mission to have many Senate Democrats begin to challenge their leadership about the wisdom of such drastic changes to inmate discipline during Senate Majority Conference meetings. In fact, as a result of our direct lobbying efforts, three weeks ago we stopped both the Senate and Assembly from taking up and passing their joint criminal justice reform package (including HALT). Should the Legislature signal that it will be moving the HALT bill to the floor, we are ready to directly attack those members who fail to stand with us.

Roughly two and a half weeks ago, Governor Cuomo announced plans to close up to three prisons. We took him to task immediately and did a statewide media blitz, pushing back on his proposal that would unquestionably make our prisons more dangerous. We will fight tooth and nail to protect our members, save their jobs and keep these prisons open. Note a recent article that demonstrates our efforts in generating support, particularly from suburban and upstate Democrats, [here](#).

Tied to prison closures, we have aggressively criticized the Governor for embracing double bunking, an archaic practice that overcrowds our prisons and puts our officers in harm's way. As you know, the practice of double bunking supports his desire to close prisons by producing empty beds. If he wants to be taken seriously on criminal justice reform, he must end double

bunking and restore safe officer-to-inmate ratios. As one of our priorities, we are pushing legislation that would eliminate double bunking.

It is important to note, however, the Governor's proposal simply moves up the date by which the Executive and DOCCS can close a facility. As a result of a NYSCOPBA initiated proposal signed into law several years ago, the Governor must provide a one-year notice prior to effectuating a prison closure. In addition to vehemently opposing any closure, we are demanding, at the very least, that this one-year notice be adhered to prior to any Executive action.

Moreover, we have sought to protect our members from the Governor's proposed budgetary changes to peace officer status. Legislation was recently introduced as part of his Executive Budget that could arguably limit peace officer status for all of New York's peace officers solely when on duty. Not only did we persuade the Legislature to introduce remedial legislation on this critical issue, but we are actively engaged in discussions and negotiations with the Governor's office and DOCCS to ensure that this offensive proposal is stricken from the Executive Budget so that these members maintain that status as the budget process winds to an end this month.

While these are just a few of the issues that we are working on and closely monitoring, there are even more proposals out there that are damning and outright disrespectful to our members. Our advocacy oftentimes must be followed with extensive education efforts, further complicating matters with new elected officials and their staffers.

That being said, we are up to the task. I want to assure you that our government relations and communications teams are working tirelessly to advocate on your behalf and stifle proposals and legislation that would make our jobs more difficult and more dangerous.

If you have any questions at all, please do not hesitate to ask. Thank you for all of your hard work.

In Unity,

Michael Powers
President, NYSCOPBA