

House Republican Press Release

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HOUSE REPUBLICANS CLOSE FELONY LOOPHOLES FOR 'SAFE HOMES, SAFE STREETS'



HARTFORD – House Republican Leader Lawrence F. Cafero Jr., today urged lawmakers to close loopholes in the state’s repeat felony laws that allow dangerous paroled criminals to roam Connecticut streets because their sentences were prematurely commuted.

“The time to reform these fatally flawed laws has long since passed. What happened in Cheshire cannot be rationalized but we must insist on tougher laws to make sure that dangerous felons are kept behind bars and not serving relatively small fractions of their sentences,” Cafero said.

In recent days, Cafero said, some Democratic lawmakers have repeatedly said there was nothing that could have been done to prevent the horrible triple murders in Cheshire and instead have tried to focus on the higher costs of longer incarceration. “That response from government is unacceptable and the public will not be swayed by this tactic. The only thing we cannot afford to do is *not try* to make our homes and street safe,” Cafero said.

He testified before the Judiciary Committee that is considering sentencing reform in the wake of the triple murders in Cheshire last July 23. Cafero and other Republicans have repeatedly called for a special session to correct unconstitutional persistent felony laws, the so-called Three Strikes statutes, and other significant reforms. Democrats have rejected a special session.

Cafero outlined the specific proposals he presented:

- Eliminate judicial discretion in applying longer sentences for repeat violent offenders as the state Supreme Court has mandated;
- Insist that repeat offenders serves at least 85 percent of their sentences not the current 50 percent;
- Classify home invasion as a violent crime;
- Mandatory life sentences for the third violent crime;
- Approve the “Castle Doctrine” that assumes a home owner has a right to use deadly force against a home invader;
- Make the death penalty more workable and less timely to impose.

Cafero noted that it took nearly 19 years from the time of the conviction of serial murderer Michael Ross to his execution and it was only after Ross insisted that his appeal process be ended. “We have a capital punishment statute on the books. Let’s make it more workable, more reasonable,” Cafero said.

He added, "Lawmakers are in agreement on most of these areas. The Supreme instructed the legislature months ago that it must fix the persistent felony offender laws. Other homes invasions have taken place since the Cheshire tragedy. We must act now."