

House Republican Press Release

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Greater Waterbury Legislators: Dem Bill Increasing Penalties for Repeat Violent Offenders is No 3 Strikes Law



Reps D'Amelio, DelGobbo, Noujaim, Williams: Dems' Bill is Dumbed Down Version of GOP Proposal

Legislation proposed by the state legislature's majority Democrats that passed that state House Friday increases penalties for repeat dangerous felony offenders but falls far short of a Republican proposal that would impose mandatory life sentences on criminals convicted of three violent felony offenses, four Greater Waterbury legislators said today.

State representatives Anthony J. D'Amelio, Kevin M. DelGobbo, Selim Noujaim, and Sean Williams, supported a Republican 'three strikes and you're out' measure that was killed by the majority Democrats before voting for the weaker Democrat bill.

The Democrat bill (Senate Bill 671) would authorize a judge to double the penalties for certain violent felony offenses following a second violent crime and triple the penalty after a third offense - up to a maximum of life in prison for a violent felon. The measure, which passed the state Senate early Thursday morning, received final legislative approval by the House Friday and was sent to Governor Rell to be signed into law.

"The bill we passed today is stronger than earlier proposals offered by the majority Democrats, but is significantly weaker than the 'three strikes measure that we have been calling for since last summer's horrific home invasion murders in Cheshire," said Representative D'Amelio, R-71st District. "The majority Democrats have consistently supported proposals that fall far short of our three strikes proposal and which will not adequately protect the law-abiding people of Connecticut. But given the majority party's control of both chambers, this legislation appears to be the best we can expect this year."

"I'm bitterly disappointed that this legislature failed to adopt a true three strikes and you're out bill. The fundamental premise of life in our country is our right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. You can't enjoy any of them if you live in fear," said Representative DelGobbo, R-Naugatuck. "The people of Connecticut were shocked and frightened by last summer's murders in Cheshire and wanted tough new laws that would give them real protection from career criminals. The legislation that passed tonight fails to keep faith with them."

"Dr. William Petit, whose family was murdered last July by two paroled repeat offenders, strongly supports stiff prison sentences for criminals who commit multiple violent felonies," said Representative Noujaim, R-Waterbury. "Dr Petit had it right when he said at a 'Take Back the Night' rally in Waterbury Thursday that Connecticut's criminal

justice system cares more about the rights of criminals than it does about their victims. Every life, regardless of who they may be, to me is a very precious life.”

“The bill we passed tonight is marginally stronger than the legislation we approved in January but it is still a far cry from the three strikes law I support,” said Representative Williams, R-68th District. “Even this bill would not have been possible if we had not held the Democrats’ feet to the fire by bringing back our three strikes proposal time and again. They know the people of Connecticut are fed up with their obstinate refusal to even consider legislation that would put violent career criminals behind bars for life. At best, their bill is a dumbed-down version of our three strikes measure. Our proposal is the real thing. We will continue bringing it back until we put it on the books once and for all.”