

House Republican Press Release

September 20, 2007
Press Office: 860-240-8700

Rep. DelGobbo: Tougher Sentencing for Persistent Violent Offenders Rejected by Democrat Majority



Dem Legislators Reject Republican Call to Consider Real 'Three Strikes' Law, Other Responses to Cheshire Murders

The state legislature's majority Democrats turned their backs on Connecticut residents concerned about their personal safety in the wake of the home invasion murders in Cheshire this summer when they refused to consider Republican proposals for tougher sentences for persistent violent offenders in a special legislative session Thursday, state representative Kevin M DelGobbo said today.

The majority Democrats rejected a proposal offered by House and Senate Republicans that would have brought several initiatives relating to persistent offenders, burglary, the Board of Pardons and Paroles and the release of violent offenders to the floor of the state House of Representatives and the state Senate for action during the special session, said Representative DelGobbo, R-Naugatuck.

The Republican proposals would have strengthened Connecticut's persistent offender laws, reclassified burglary of a residence as a violent crime, reformed the state's parole system, and put a real Three Strikes law on the books - one that would have eliminated judicial discretion in applying the law and required life in prison for offenders convicted of a third serious felony.

"Naugatuck residents who have contacted me in the wake of the vicious home invasion murders in Cheshire in July have been virtually unanimous in demanding that repeat violent offenders be locked up until they are too old to be serious threats to law-abiding citizens like Dr. William Petit and his wife and two daughters," Representative DelGobbo said.

The Connecticut Supreme Court recently struck down a section of Connecticut's existing persistent offender law as unconstitutional. The court ruled that the jury, not the judge, should have made the decision on whether a career criminal most recently convicted of assault for shooting a New Haven police officer, should have been required to serve a longer sentence.

"Despite this decision, which makes it virtually impossible to invoke the persistent offender law to impose lengthy sentences on repeat offenders, and the growing public outrage over the Cheshire murders, the majority Democrats refused to allow a vote on our common sense initiatives to protect the public from dangerous violent repeat offenders," Representative DelGobbo said. "Putting off action on proposals our citizens are demanding to protect themselves and their families and instead, acting on an obscure

state contracting proposal that is hardly a priority for most people, clearly demonstrates just how out of touch legislative Democrats are with the citizens of Connecticut.”

Highlights of the Republican proposal were:

1. **Enacting a Strong Three Strikes Law** that eliminates judicial discretion and requires life imprisonment for a third serious felony conviction, keeping career criminals in jail and out of our neighborhoods.
2. **Reclassifying Burglary of a Residence (Home Invasion) as a Violent Crime**
 - a. Force dangerous felons who commit this crime to serve 85 percent of their jail sentences before applying for parole (under current law, the majority of these criminals are released after serving only half of their sentences).
 - b. Impose a mandatory minimum five-year prison sentence on criminals convicted of burglary in the first or second degree.
3. **Strengthening Connecticut’s Persistent Offender Law** by following the state Supreme Court’s recommendation to grant juries the power to determine enhanced sentences on criminals they deem to be dangerous persistent offenders.
4. **Reforming the State’s Parole Process**
 1. Transfer the Board of Parole from the Department of Corrections to the Department of Public Safety.
 2. Increase membership on the Board of Parole.
 3. Require transcripts and other information pertaining to a candidate for parole be provided to Board of Parole members at least three business days prior to the candidate’s hearing.
 4. Require released offenders to report to their local police station to be photographed and documented within one week of their release.
 5. Require more information on the court record at the time of sentencing.
5. **Requiring Serious Criminals to Wear GPS Tracking Devices** on their person at all times as a condition of their release.