

House Republican Press Release

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**REP. O'NEILL BACKS TOUGHER REPEAT FELON LAWS IN
WAKE OF CHESHIRE TRAGEDY**



*MAJORITY PARTY REFUSES TO CONSIDER
REPUBLICAN EFFORTS TO TIGHTEN 'THREE
STRIKES' PROPOSAL DURING SPECIAL
LEGISLATIVE SESSION*

HARTFORD –During a special legislative session held on September 20, State Rep. Arthur J. O'Neill, R-Southbury, voted to expand the session to amend the state's "Three Strikes" Law in the wake of the July 23 Cheshire home invasion that left three people murdered. Democrat Majority legislators rejected House Republican attempts to toughen the laws and correct unconstitutional flaws. Instead, the majority party called two special legislative sessions to pass a state contracting bill and borrow \$3.1 billion more for major capital projects and so-called earmarked items for individual districts.

On September 4, the Connecticut State Supreme Court struck down part of Connecticut's current persistent offender law, finding the law unconstitutional. The court provided direction on just how to address the portions of the current law that it found unconstitutional. The Supreme Court's decision ordered that the jury, not the judge, decide if Arnold Bell, a lifetime criminal most recently convicted of assault for shooting a New Haven police officer, be required to serve a longer sentence.

"As legislators, we have a responsibility to take action on these issues," said Rep. O'Neill, who serves as Ranking Member (House Republican Leader) of the Legislature's Judiciary Committee. "There is clearly a need to make changes to state law after the horrific murders in Cheshire and this special session provided an excellent opportunity to make those changes to the three strikes law and parole system. It is very disappointing that opportunity was rejected in a nearly party-line vote."

Highlights of the Republican proposal are:

1. **Enact 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. **Reclassify Burglary of a Residence (Home Invasion) as a Violent Crime**

- a. Force dangerous felons who commit this crime to serve 85% 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 5-year prison sentence on criminals convicted of burglary in the first or second degree.
3. **Strengthen 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. **Reform the State's Parole Process**
 1. Transfer the Board of Parole from the Dept. of Corrections to the Dept. 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. **Require Serious Criminals to Wear GPS Tracking Devices** on their person at all times as a condition of their release.