



NEWS...

From

Legislator Tom Cilmi

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Justice System in Need of Overhaul

Calling the justice system “clearly broken” in the aftermath of the killing of New York City Police Officer Peter Figoski by reputed career criminal, Lamont Pride, Suffolk County Legislator Tom Cilmi (R-Bay Shore) is calling for the overhaul of a system which, he says, all too often sets criminals loose to strike again, sometimes with absolutely tragic results.

In a letter to Newsday’s Publisher, Fred Groser, Legislator Cilmi extracted this paragraph from a story appearing in Newsday as grounds for his claim:

“Police said Pride is wanted in North Carolina on a charge of assault with a deadly weapon and had last been arrested Nov. 3, but was released by a judge on his own recognizance after it was determined authorities in North Carolina would not extradite him to face charges there. Pride had a history of violence, including at least five prior arrests in New York and North Carolina on charges ranging from drug sale to grand larceny.” (Newsday, Four More Charged In Death of Cop from Long Island, December 13, 2011)

Cilmi asked the newspaper, which has been known for its in-depth reporting by way of a number of multi-part stories dealing with a variety of the most vexing issues of the day, to undertake a complete examination of the justice system including, but not limited to, the following topics:

1. Evidentiary rules/standards
2. Length of time from arraignment to trial
3. Cost of public defenders
4. Bail amounts and crimes committed while those accused are out on bail

5. The justness and effectiveness of current sentencing standards
6. Plea Bargaining & reduced sentences
7. The “luxury” of incarceration (three square meals, child care, cable television and better medical benefits than many law-abiding citizens)
8. Recidivism

Cilmi said, “Newsday has done a very good job over the years distilling complicated topics. Our justice system is just one of many areas where we need large-scale change. Officer Figoski’s violent death at the hands of this heartless criminal, and the relentless pain caused as a result, needn’t be in vain if we use it as a rallying cry to fix a system that’s clearly broken.”

Legislator Cilmi acknowledged that crime is an issue much bigger than the justice system. “Fixing the justice system is obviously only one part of the solution. There are so many factors leading to criminal behavior...societal, sociological, psychological, etc. It’s a really big problem; but we cannot allow the size of a challenge to dissuade us from action. Yes, this is completely beyond the jurisdiction of the County Legislature, but I am not about to chalk this up to someone else’s problem. I am not going to remain silent when one of America’s finest is senselessly killed by someone who should have been in jail.”