

KATE BROWNING NEWS

COUNTY OF SUFFOLK



COUNTY LEGISLATURE

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TARGET: DRUG AND NUISANCE HOMES

BROWNING INTRODUCES BILL TO STRENGTHEN COUNTY CRACK HOUSE LAW

Mastic, NY – Changes to the Suffolk County Crack House Law, which was first created in 1989, were introduced by Legislator Kate Browning (WF-Shirley) on March 23 and aim to strengthen the two-decade old law. The changes will make the law more effective and efficient when dealing with serial offenders who are using their homes to conduct criminal activity.

With crime on the rise, especially cases involving heroin and other addictive drugs, the crack house law can be a key tool in the arsenal for law enforcement agencies cracking down on homes that foster criminal activity. To date the law has been used sporadically, but at times has been crucial in putting an end to drug activity and other crimes that negatively impacting residential neighborhoods. Unfortunately, the crack house law has not been used as often and effectively as Legislator Browning feels it could be.

In an effort to strengthen the law and empower police officers to utilize it more, introductory resolution 1334-10 proposes amendments introduced by Browning that seek to extend the time frame in which action can be taken on a home if multiple arrests occur. The original law requires two offenses to take place within a two-year time frame in order for the county attorney to take action and impose large fines on the property owner. Legislator Browning's changes will set a three-year period for two criminal arrests that trigger punishment for the homeowner.

"This is a great law, but Suffolk County is not utilizing it to the extent it should be," stated Browning. "These changes to the statute will strengthen the county's ability to crack down on homes that harbor criminals and become havens for criminal activity."

Another major deficiency in the law is that no clear procedures are codified to ensure information is being shared between the police department, county attorney, and the legislature. How homes are red-flagged for prosecution under the crack house law, and how quickly that information is shared between the necessary departments is unclear under the current law. The county has also been too slow in processing the information received from the police department and notifying the homeowner that there have been violations at their property.

"There have been instances in which an arrest has been made, but the county took over a year to notify the homeowner that a violation at their property triggered action under the crack house law," stated Browning. "In addition, local legislators aren't being notified in a timely fashion that notices have been issued within their respective districts. My office has received notices a year and a half after an arrest has been made. By extending the time frame from two years to three years, and setting deadlines for notices to be issued after an arrest is made, my amendments will greatly expand the number of trouble spots that can be addressed while improving communication and execution."

Legislator Browning is proposing that no more than 90 days pass from the time an arrest is made, notice is sent to the homeowner, and the local legislator is notified of the actions taken. Coupled with the extension from two years to three years, Browning believes the county will be able to make a major impact on homes where drug dealing and other criminal activity is rampant.

“The path drugs take to get to our children starts in these homes,” concluded Browning. “My proposed amendments will empower the county to crack down on drug dealing and improve the effectiveness of the law. This law was intended to shut down these hot spots of drug trafficking and we will be able to eliminate far more criminal elements when these amendments pass.”

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