



June 11, 2020

## **AN OPEN LETTER TO THE GOVERNOR:**

We need more leadership, and less rhetoric.

Dear Governor Cuomo:

During times of chaos and division, uncertainty and unrest, tension and suffering, we look to our leaders to help guide the ship. We look to our leaders to bring clarity, solutions, resolve, action, and healing. At the same time, we trust that our leaders will stoically stand for what's right, for truth and for the good of all.

Governor Cuomo, we call upon you today to stick to the facts. We call upon you to stop fanning the flames of division. We call upon you to stop exploiting anti-police hysteria and unwarranted political rhetoric to ram through legislation that is ill conceived, hastily crafted, and anti-police. We call upon you to involve all stakeholders in this process, and we call upon you to do what's right.

The noble police officers of this State are suffering from your actions and your rhetoric, and ultimately all New Yorkers will suffer when, by your actions, our police agencies have been rendered unable to effectively pursue the guilty and protect the innocent.

For more than 40 years, anti-police activists have pushed for the repeal of Civil Rights Law 50-a which protects the police and other emergency responders from undue harassment, and safeguards the Peoples' criminal cases from sabotage by unscrupulous defense attorneys. Each year, when repeal has been considered in the light of day, reason and logic have prevailed and the Legislature has rejected repeal. Now we find ourselves in a time when reason and logic are seemingly lost. As a result, you appear ready to "seize the moment" and stampede into law repeal of 50-a and a whole package of other anti-police legislation, without an opportunity for meaningful input and dialogue from all of the stakeholders. Not even the rank and file members of the Legislature have been afforded the opportunity to give these bills due consideration as they have been rushed through to a vote. A democratic legislative process requires transparency, due deliberation and leadership that can withstand the inflamed passions of the moment.

Governor Cuomo, your rhetoric and your refusal to speak up for the selfless police officers who, every day, put their lives at risk to defend those who are otherwise defenseless, is contributing to the irrational calls by a very vocal few to "Defund the Police." This ideology is dangerous and, if accepted and acted upon, only serves to put our communities, our families, our neighbors and our public servants at greater risk.

Make no mistake; the potential for very dangerous and unsettling days ahead is real. In recent days there have been more than 80 burglaries of firearms dealers, with more than a thousand firearms stolen.

Explosives are finding their way into the hands of anarchists. The violent agitators who have been hijacking peaceful demonstrations are being empowered by demagogues who refuse to acknowledge that their criminal acts are wrong. Their violent activities will not soon subside. If police departments are defunded, who will protect the majority of our citizens from the marauding few? This situation screams for leadership. We implore you to call for reason in this time of mindless rage. Your silence on this issue is contributing to the dismantling of society's bulwark against anarchy.

Governor, before rushing to sign into law poorly vetted legislation that will put our police officers in grave danger, we implore you to consider the consequences of doing so. The overwhelming majority of police officers, firefighters, correctional workers, EMS providers and other public safety first responders are good and faithful servants. They do not condone the wrongdoing of any rogue cop. They serve ALL of the people of New York, without regard to race. They do so with concern and compassion for those they serve, even those who do not appreciate it, and do so despite the obvious risk to their own safety. Law enforcement officers across the country have been engaged for the past two weeks in protecting the peaceful protestors who have been protesting against them, in the course of which three police officers have been killed and 800 have been wounded. What other profession would expose themselves to such risks, and for such little gratitude? Governor, these good men and women deserve your active support, not harmful rhetoric nor punitive legislation.

Each year, a ceremony is held at the Police Memorial Wall in Albany where the names of New York's 1,622 hero police officers killed in the line of duty are inscribed. There is a long tradition, spanning several decades, of every sitting Governor attending this annual, somber event; but you never have. Each year your own criminal justice agency coordinates the selection of the winner of the Governor's Police Officer of the Year Award, recognizing an officer's sacrifices above and beyond the call of duty. Here again, there is a long tradition of the Governor attending every such annual ceremony to pay respect to the honoree, but you have chosen not to follow that tradition. Governor Cuomo, your absence from these events is palpable and strongly felt by the law enforcement community each time they gather. There is a broad sense among law enforcement that you simply do not support police officers in this state. That lack of support is made evident once again by your failure to insist that law enforcement have a seat at the table when momentous changes in policing are being considered. This is the time we should be working together. Law enforcement officers could provide important insight that would insure that any desired changes in the system would actually be workable. We have seen too many examples in the last few years of criminal justice legislation being pushed through in the dark of night without the opportunity for scrutiny or input from law enforcement, resulting in disastrous, unworkable laws.

The time has come to hear each other, to support each other, and to work collaboratively to bring clear, transparent and fact-based information, ideas, and reforms forward. Let us work together to effect the positive change that we all wish to see, and let's do so in a way that accomplishes our goals without endangering the police officers who already risk so much, or the communities that they serve.

Governor Cuomo, we need more leadership and less rhetoric.

Respectfully,



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Sheriff Jeffrey Murphy, President  
New York State Sheriffs' Association



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Chief Patrick D. Phelan, President  
New York State Association of Chiefs of Police