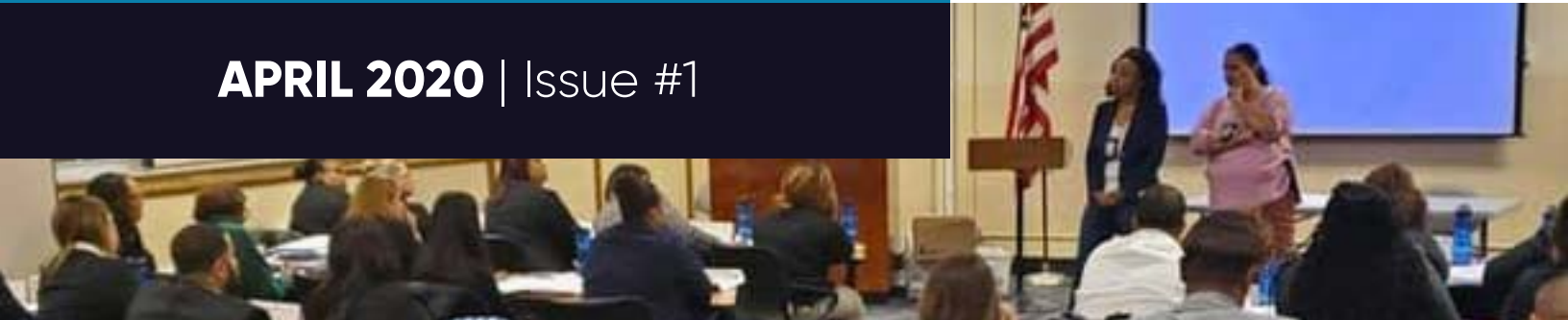




APRIL 2020 | Issue #1



**Council Leader Gina Lopez | Assistant Council Leader Dayna Lamb
Assistant Council Leader Joseph Carey | Treasurer Yolanda Pittman
Secretary Douglas Rusinko**

COVID-19 UPDATES:



The safety of PEF members is our number one priority. We've put together a webpage with information on COVID-19, including a comprehensive FAQ document that is updated on a daily basis.

Dedicated page to Coronavirus Updates:
<https://www.pef.org/media-center/covid-19/>

COVID-19 PEF Q&A
<https://www.pef.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/COVID-19-FAQ-4-10-20.pdf>

On April 9th, President Spence held a tele-townhall on coronavirus. Click below to listen to the teleconference.



NEWS HIGHLIGHTS:

- Gina Lopez Panelist at Legislative Conference
- Parole officers welcome the new class of graduates
- State Parole Overhaul
- PEF focus on contract, parole bill
- Union: Parole overhaul is misguided, dangerous
- DOCCS/Parole Lobby Day
- What's Wrong With Our Parole System - Panel Discussion

STEWARDS: Keith Healey - [Buffalo](#) | Douglas Rusinko - [Rochester](#) | Jerry Baranska & Anthony Prave - [Syracuse](#) | Anthony Ziccone & Randy Kunzman - [Elmira](#) | Michelle Dashnow & Kyke Rief - [Albany](#) | Barbara McAndrews - [Poughkeepsie](#) | Carla Andre Joseph & James Hartford & Rosa Nunez - [NYC](#) | Chavela Bratton & Yolanda Pittman - [Jamaica](#) | Catharine Adams & Vikky Urena - [Brooklyn](#) | Gabriela Franklin & Najieb Issac - [Bronx](#) | Darryl Stevenson - [Health and Safety](#) | Robert Hodson - [EBoard](#)

Parole Update: Message from Council Leader Gina Lopez

March 29, 2020

Dear Parole Officers,

As you know, approximately 500 parolees were released on Friday, March 29, 2020, as part of the Governor's initiative to curb the spread of COVID-19. Another 600 are set to be released in the coming week.

I know most of you worked straight through from Friday morning into the early morning hours on Saturday. I realize there is exhaustion, coupled with fear and anxiety. On Saturday afternoon, I started to hear from some of you that those parolees were instructed to report for their conditions at parole offices statewide. I immediately called President Spence and talked to numerous SPOs regarding the direction given by DOCCS. Saturday night, PEF staff had numerous conversations with DOCCS leadership.

At approximately 8:00pm, at our request, DOCCS sent a clarifying email to all RDs and ARDs, stating in part:

"The COVID-19 releases are NOT to be treated as arrivals, which would then require an office report. In an effort to meet the public health goal intended by these release actions, each released was given written instruction on the release/warrant lift document to make phone contact with either CSOC or their assigned Bureau in order to provide address and release confirmation. Please take immediate action to instruct your Bureau Chiefs to ensure NO COVID-19 releases are directed to make an office report. They can be visited in the community to address any conditions that need to be imposed or be given verbal instructions over the phone."

We hope this directive provides clarity. If you hear contrary information from your supervisors, please contact your PEF Field Representative George Fernandez immediately.

Your work and sacrifice during this crisis, as well as that of other PEF members serving New Yorkers, is an inspiration and a bright light peaking through the dark clouds that hang over all of us. We will not rest in our fight to keep you as safe as possible throughout this public health emergency.

President Wayne Spence speaks out for PEF parole officers

February 17, 2020

CBS 6 Investigates: NYS lost track of over 3,200 parolees, including violent sex offenders.



Information for PEF Parole Officers

April 9, 2020

PEF Parole Officer,

Due to the ongoing statewide effort to contain the spread of the COVID-19 virus, NYS DOCCS has extended the suspension of all in-person parolee reports until April 29, 2020. The existing restriction was due to expire April 17, 2020.

If you have any questions, please contact your assigned supervisor for Community Supervision.

As always, my number one goal is your safety. Please let me know if your worksite is not abiding by the established Coronavirus protocols. May you and your families remain safe.

In unity,
Wayne Spence - PEF President



Gina Lopez Panelist at Legislative Conference

February 15, 2020

Parole officer and PEF Division 236 Council Leader Gina Lopez speaks as a panelist February 15 at the Empire State Plaza in Albany. The event took place during the 49th Annual Legislative Conference of the NYS Association of Black and Puerto Rican Legislators. The panelists spoke on issues related to re-entry of incarcerated people as they return to their communities. The panel moderators were state Assembly members Al Taylor and Diana C. Richardson, and the panelists also include Leon Maxwell, Judy Juster, Kevin Livingston, Fr. Eric Cruz, and Dyjuan Tatro.



Parole Needs and Fighting Back

January 25, 2020

President Wayne Spence and Region Coordinator Darlene Williams sharing thoughts with #PEF members of Division 236 about the needs of parole and fighting back. Thank you to PEF Field Rep George Fernandez for helping organize and plan a successful event.

Wayne Spence speaks out against Less is More in the "Queens Daily Eagle"

QUEENS DAILY EAGLE | January 31, 2020

By David Brand

When Dyjuan Tatro left prison after more than a decade, he went to work, consulting a candidate for state attorney general and advocating for criminal justice reforms as a government affairs officer. Tatro, 33, earned a degree from Bard College and gained international notoriety as a member of a prison debate team that defeated a team from Harvard at a competition.

Despite his lofty accomplishments and the many years that have passed since the assault conviction that landed him behind bars, Tatro remains at risk for reincarceration every day. He is one of thousands of New Yorkers on parole who can be sent back to jail based on technical violations — small and sometimes unavoidable mistakes, like returning home from work after curfew.

"Parole in this state is punitive. The number one function is to send you back to prison," Tatro said. Supervision restrictions have complicated his career and forced him to routinely sit in a parole office for hours, waiting for a brief meeting with an officer, he said. "Parole has not done anything to help me."

A bill before state lawmakers would address those issues and reorient supervised release around constructive growth and re-entry into the community, instead of approximate jail and saddling parolees with the constant threat of reincarceration. The bill, known as the Less Is More Act, would specifically establish an "earned time credit" that reduces a person's post-release supervision sentence as they meet the conditions of their release. It would also limit the types of technical violations that drive an increase in the jail and prison population, even as the number of people incarcerated for misdemeanors and felonies has decreased significantly.



A 2018 report by the Mayor's Office on Criminal Justice found that 16 percent of detainees in New York City were jailed for technical violations. From 2014 to 2018, the total jail population in New York City decreased by roughly 27 percent, but the number of people jailed for technical violations rose, according to a report by the city's Independent Budget Office.

"We're literally now building floors on jails for technical violators — people who missed appointments or tested dirty," said Vincent Schiraldi, co-director of Columbia University's Justice Lab and a former commissioner of New York City Probation last year. "People are living in homeless shelters, they have drug problems, they can't get jobs — and instead of helping them we're spending [hundreds of millions of dollars] locking them up."

The Less Is More Act, which has support from several county prosecutors, failed to make it out of committee in the last legislative session, but justice reform advocates and formerly incarcerated individuals are optimistic it will pass in 2020.

"The most challenging part [of parole] is they set curfew, which, when you're trying to get a job or have programs to complete is hard," said KiKi Dunston, a Corona native who served six years in prison.

Dunston has had three different parole officers during her time in post-release supervision, she said. Each transition has further complicated her ability to work and forced her to repeat the same tedious paperwork or program assignments — many of which she had already finished in prison.

"My parole officer that I had initially retired and the transition was difficult; it was getting a new person who did not know me," Dunston said. "They didn't understand things that should have been in the computer system or what I had done already. They had to get permission for their supervisor for every single step. It was like going back to the beginning."

Dunston said post release programs should instead focus on helping people access services, seek jobs or build their career, not create a threat that hangs over their heads and makes success a challenge.

The state Department of Corrections and Community Supervision declined to comment on the legislation.

Opponents of the Less Is More Act have downplayed the impact of technical violations on people in post-release supervision, explaining that most reincarcerated parolees

are sent to jail because they have "absconded" — cut off ties with their parole officer — or because they were re-arrested for another offense. Only about 9 percent of parolees who are reincarcerated are sent back to jail because of technical violations, the state says.

Wayne Spence, president of the union that represents parole officers statewide, said the Less Is More Act would remove consequences for violating conditions of release.

"If technical violations alone are not enough to send someone to jail then how do you intervene when you see someone spiraling out of control?" said Spence, who leads the Public Employees Federation. "These people who did something wrong need some type of corrective action."

Spence acknowledged that some parole violations are "based on CYA" — a "cover your ass" mentality — that compels parole officers to "err on the side of caution and say, 'Let's protect our community and take them back into custody.'" But he said parole officers are typically willing to provide alternatives to incarceration for parolees who commit technical violations.

He said some reform is needed, but he suggested a more gradual approach. "You need a scalpel to do something like this, but they're coming at it with a machete."

But to justice reformers and the formerly incarcerated, the current system is too broken for small adjustments.

"You're walking on pins and needles. You don't know when you're going to be called into the office and told 'We're going to violate you because you missed curfew,'" Legal Aid Society attorney Michelle Fields told the Eagle last year

"You don't have a chance to reacclimate or readjust," she added. "It's still punitive instead of, let me have redemption, let me re-enter society, let me have the opportunity to be a productive citizen. You have this whole supervision hanging over your head."





PEF Membership Meeting & Contract Update January 10, 2020

PEF Parole Officers from Regions 9, 10, 11 & 12, joined President Wayne Spence and PEF Contract Chair Darlene Williams for a membership meeting and contract update @ PEF NYC Office.



Parole officers welcome the new class of graduates

December 3, 2019

PEF Council Leader Gina Lopez & Assistant Council Leader Dayna Lamb, Parole officers welcome the new class of graduates. They provided an update on where we are with our contract negotiations and signed up 46 new members.



State Parole Overhaul

November 5, 2019

"If somebody is on parole and they stop reporting - that's the equivalent of escaping jail." Wayne Spence

Less is More bill could be a danger to our communities! Check your facts!

This bill, left unchecked, may be disastrous for the communities we serve! #WeAreUnionStrong #KeepOurCommunitiesSafe



Parole Officer Marco Cardenas

November 15, 2019

PEF Parole members Benefit Event for Parole Officer Marco Cardenas





November 2, 2019

CL Gina Lopez, PEF Parole Officer Darryl Stevenson, Ricardo Cruz and other Parole officers with President Wayne Spence meeting Senator Brian A. Benjamin to discuss Less is More Bill.

Celebrating Tony Perez
 October 13, 2020

NYC - President Wayne Spence and PEF Leadership, parole officers and DOCCS leadership celebrate the retirement of Division 236 Council Leader Tony Perez.



PEF vs LEEBA

October 15, 2019

PEF Parole Officers:

Some of you may have heard talk or received information from a union known as LEEBA. This group, which is trying to convince you that it can represent you better than PEF, was recently raided by the FBI over the stewardship of its benefit funds. LEEBA currently owes over \$500,000 to its dental and prescription drug providers! And this is not the first time the union and its leadership has been under investigation for alleged shady actions.

We thought it was important for you to have a full picture of the benefits LEEBA offers its members, compared to the benefits enjoyed by PEF members so we prepared a side-by-side comparative chart of benefits. Laid out this way, it is clear that PEF's benefits are far more comprehensive than LEEBA's and in fact LEEBA misses the mark in many areas including education and college benefits, legal defense benefits and assault, trauma and captivity benefits to name a few.





July 31, 2019

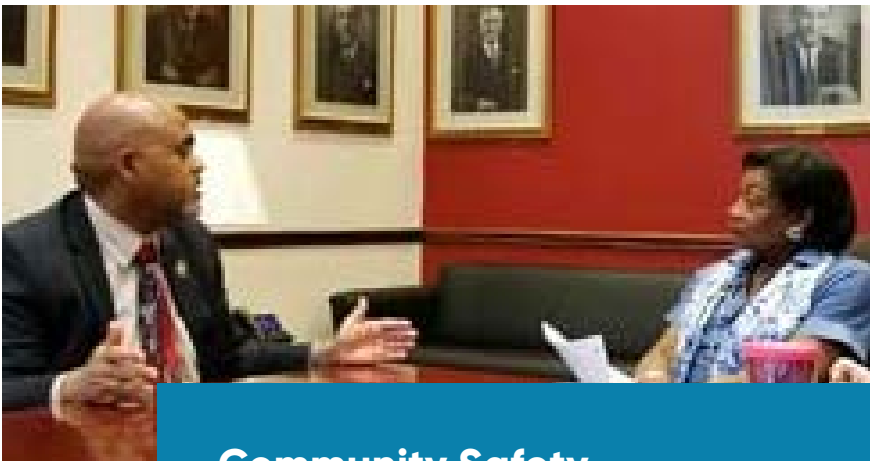
PEF Region 9 - President Wayne Spence, VP Adreina Adams, Region 9 Coordinator Diane Jaulus and Division 236 Council Leader Tony Perez recognize 17 Parole Officers and 2 Judges in the Hudson Valley Region for their exemplary contributions day in and day out to the communities they serve.



Parole Member Meeting

September 27, 2019

PEF Regions 10 & 11 - President Wayne Spence and PEF Region 11 Coordinator Bernadette O'Connor meeting with Parole members, discussing high case loads, overtime issues, line of duty and putting management on notice of benefits. Laid out this way, it is clear that PEF's benefits are far more comprehensive than LEEBA's and in fact LEEBA misses the mark in many areas including education and college benefits, legal defense benefits and assault, trauma and captivity benefits to name a few.



Community Safety

May 15, 2019

President Wayne Spence meets with Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins to discuss the negative impacts the "Less is More" Parole Legislation would have on community safety.



New York State Parole Officers Memorial

June 13, 2019

Albany, NY – PEF parole officers and DOCCS leaders gather at the New York State Parole Officers Memorial to pay tribute to the men and women who lost their lives in the line of duty. Division 236 Council Leader Tony Perez and Division 236 Steward Joe Carey laid the PEF wreath at the base of the parole memorial.

DOCCS/ Parole Lobby Day

May 14, 2019

President Wayne Spence met with Senator Benjamin and Assemblyman Mosley to talk to them about the important role PEF parole officers play in keeping our communities safe and the disastrous impact the "Less is More" bill would have if passed into law.

Parole officers are linchpins in the criminal justice system

Joe Mahoney Albany Notebook Jul 27, 2019

New York's criminal justice system has some 900 professionals who are unsung heroes — the parole officers who monitor offenders released into the community.

There is nothing glamorous about their job. It is duty that comes with plenty of headaches and frustrations, not to mention danger.

One of their missions is to facilitate the rehabilitation of offenders under their supervision. When they succeed, the offender is not the only winner. Society is as well because parole is far more cost effective than keeping someone behind bars.

The parole officers are also there to protect society from those parolees who fail to abide by the laws and the conditions of their release.

The parole officer does not designate the inmates who get released early from a prison sentence.

The state parole board calls those shots. And there is debate today over whether the current board has become too eager to grant parole to violent offenders sent to prison for monstrous and unspeakable crimes against innocent people.

The debate is being fueled by the release of a convicted killer who in a few short weeks has become an inconvenient hot potato for state bureaucrats. That killer's name is Richard LaBarbera, convicted in the brutal killing of 16-year-old Paula Bohovesky in Rockland County in 1980. The victim's 87-year-old mother, Lois Bohovesky, argued strenuously against his release, as well as an initial plan that would have allowed him to go back to his local area.

A state judge, responding to litigation filed by the mother, directed that LaBarbera live at least three counties away from where he killed the teenager, setting the stage for the parolee to be assigned to the Buffalo parole office.

In recent days, however, LaBarbera lost his freedom, at least temporarily, when parole officers locked him up for a parole violation. State officials won't say exactly what LaBarbera did, but point out he did not commit a new crime.

Among those who have been critical of LaBarbera's release are state Sens. Rob Ortt, R-North Tonawanda, and Patrick Gallivan, R-Elma. Both contend the parole board has become too tilted in favor of releasing criminals even when

courthouse records suggest the convicts could jeopardize public safety.

Gallivan upped the ante July 26 by calling on Gov. Andrew Cuomo to investigate the circumstances behind the decision to release LaBarbera.

All of this comes two months after I reported on a bill, sponsored by two downstate Senate Democrats that would end the ability of parole officers to have parolees sent to jail for technical violations of their release conditions.

As the LaBarbera controversy heated up, I contacted former parole officer Wayne Spence, now the president of the state Public Employees Federation, the union for professional workers in state government, and the chief opponent of the bill that would have handcuffed parole officers from doing the job they do now.

"Imagine if that bill had passed and become law," Spence said. "That guy (LaBarbera) would not have been locked up. He'd be out right now."

Spence said he is concerned the bill sponsors will try to ram the legislation through again when lawmakers return to Albany.

Spence said his union plans to make its case for keeping the current system for technical violations of parole intact by going directly to residents of low-income communities with high numbers of parolees, since having safe streets is in their interest.

He said he would also welcome close scrutiny of New York's parole system.

"The officers feel that they don't have the staffing needed to do the job, and the parolees feel they aren't getting what they need and are being set up for failure," he said.

While they are not in prison, parolees are still serving judicially-imposed sentences until their parole ends.

"I think a lot of politicians forget that," Spence said. He acknowledged what some liberals call "reform" is needed in New York, but said it should not come at the expense of public safety.

PEF focus on parole bill

June 7, 2019

Earlier this legislative session, state Sen. Brian Benjamin and Assemblyman Walter Mosley introduced the “Less is More” anti-parole legislation. This bill would allow more individuals to become eligible for parole under certain conditions, and keep others from returning to jail after their release.

We believe that if passed and signed into law, this bill would most likely have an extremely negative impact on violating parolees when it comes to revocation discretion of presumptive release, parole, conditional release and post-release supervision.

Because of the danger I believe this legislation presents, I met with PEF Division 236 Council Leader Tony Perez and Assistant Council Leader Gina Lopez and held face-to-face meetings with Assembly Speaker Carl Heastie, Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins, Sen. Benjamin and Assemblyman Mosley to explain how this bill would limit the role of parole officers and endanger public safety in our communities.

PAROLE BILL

LESS IS MORE



NY Legislature Democrats Push Parole Reform Bills in Bid to Reduce Incarceration

By Dan M. Clark | May 17, 2019 - law.com

President Wayne Spence speaks out against the Less is More anti-parole bill in New York Law Journal.

New York’s laws on parole could be transformed by the end of June if Democrats are successful in pushing through a series of reforms aimed at reducing the number of people incarcerated.

Meeting with Assembly speaker Carl Heastie

May 6, 2019

Albany, NY - President Wayne Spence meets with Assembly speaker Carl Heastie for a productive meeting about the anti-parole “Less is More” bill. President Spence explained how this ill-conceived legislation will have a long term impact on public safety.



Union: Parole overhaul is misguided, dangerous

By Joe Mahoney CNHI State Reporter - May 22, 2019

ALBANY — The politically influential Public Employees Federation is working to derail legislation that it says would erect hurdles for parole officers to return supervised felons to prison when they violate the conditions of their release.

The bill, sponsored by Assemblyman Walter Mosley, D-Brooklyn, and Sen. Brian Benjamin, D-Manhattan, contends that taxpayer dollars are being wasted in order to lock up former inmates for “technical” violations of their release conditions.

“There are approximately 35,000 people under active parole supervision in New York State who at almost any time can see their efforts to successfully rejoin the workforce and reintegrate into their families and their communities disrupted by re-incarceration for a technical violation,” the legislation states.

The measure aims to ensure that those who are accused of parole violations get a hearing in local criminal courts to determine whether they should go to jail pending the parole system’s adjudication of the alleged violation.

It also encourages the state to embrace a “less-is-more approach” by creating incentives for offenders to shave the amount of time they spend under community supervision by adhering to release conditions. If the number of people under supervision is reduced, the legislation suggests, the state can focus its resources on “those who are most in need and who pose the greatest risks.”

PEF, the bargaining agent for parole officers, says the thrust of the legislation is bound to result in “unintended consequences” by restricting the ability of parole officers to manage and discipline felons under their supervision

PEF President Wayne Spence, in an interview with CNHI, said the legislation misrepresents the work of parole officers, insisting they act in the interest of public safety when they lodge a violation. Spence said the officers generally only seek to have parolees put back in prison for a combination of missteps and not for minor matters.

“Parole officers do not violate a guy just for failure to report,” Spence said. “We don’t violate a person for not living at his residence. It’s usually a totality of things.” If a parolee has been using illegal drugs, he added, that could be an indication that the felon has been associating with narcotics traffickers who have access to firearms, he explained.

But the sponsors have a different view. Benjamin said New York ranks second in the nation, trailing only Illinois, in revoking parole for technical violations. He said the system allows parole officers to act as “judge and jury” in determining what happens to parolees who break curfew or associate with other ex-offenders.

“Change is going to happen with regard to how technical violations occur and facilitate mass incarceration in the state of New York,” Benjamin said.

Spence, noting he is an African-American who has worked as a parole officer, said he disputes assertions made in the legislation that the practice of returning parolees to prison for violating their release conditions hurts minority communities..

“I believe that within six months after this becomes law you’re going to see an increase in violent crimes in communities of color because this is where a majority of parolees live,” said Spence, who heads one of the nation’s largest white-collar unions.

Spence noted that over the past decade many of the administrative law judge positions involved in parole oversight have been filled by black and Latino women. Those jobs could be on the chopping block as a result of the legislation, said Spence, noting he has met personally with Senate Majority Leader Andrew Stewart-Cousins to let her know PEF vigorously opposes the legislation.

Citing 2016 statistics, the legislation contends New York’s criminal justice system imprisons parolees for release violations at a rate that is five times higher than the national average. Only 1,318 of the parolees who were returned to prison that year went back because they were convicted for a new offense, while more than 6,300 of the returnees had violated parole conditions, according to the bill.

Jonathan Gradess, former director of the New York State Defenders Association, said when parolees have to be sent back to prison, it’s a reflection that the system set up for reintegrating offenders in society has failed.

Instead of moving to lock up technical violators, parole officers should be encouraged to step up monitoring and help the offenders work through the difficulties they are having in adjusting to post-prison life, Gradess said.

The transitions are often difficult, he noted, as jobs and housing opportunities can be in short supply for those with criminal pasts.

Spence has summoned all PEF-elected parole leaders to Albany on Tuesday in an effort to suggest amendments to the bill sponsors.

Benjamin said he is willing to listen to the union’s viewpoints, but noted New York’s policies for determining incarceration practices should be based solely on public safety concerns, not protecting jobs connected to its criminal justice system.

PEF Region 1 Meeting

April 25, 2019

PEF Region 1 Buffalo, NY - President Wayne Spence meeting with Parole Officers in PEF Region 1.



What's Wrong With Our Parole System - Panel Discussion

March 23, 2019

Plymouth Church, Brooklyn, NY - Region 11 Coordinator Bernadette O'Connor, D236 Council Leader Tony Perez, VP Adrian Adams and other #PEF parole officers attended a panel discussion on the topic of "What's Wrong With Our Parole System" at Plymouth Church in Brooklyn. Brooklyn DA Eric Gonzalez led the lively and informative discussion.



March 21, 2019

NYC - PEF Council Leader Tony Perez & PEF Legislative Director Greg Amorosi meet with Senator Brian Benjamin in NYC to discuss and express PEF's concerns about Anti-Parole "Less is More" bill.

So called Anti-Parole "Less is More" Bil

February 27, 2019

Message from PEF President Wayne Spence:

In response to concerns raised by my fellow parole officers, PEF Legislative Director Greg Amorosi and I met today with the Senate sponsor of the so called Anti-Parole "Less is More" bill (#S1343-A), Senator Brian A. Benjamin. The bill is sponsored in the Assembly by Walter Mosley (#A5493).

S.1343a (Benjamin) and Senate Crime and Correction Committee
A.5493 (Mosley) and Assembly Correction Committee

I firmly believe this proposed legislation would have a dramatic negative impact on every aspect of being a parole officer and how we do our day to day jobs.

When the Senator told me that he didn't think parolees should face incarceration for absconding or failing to report, I knew I was in for a long meeting.

The Senator made it clear that he was not comfortable with what he described as the current "parole empire". He suggested that parole officers were only concerned because they were going to lose their "big stick" and most disconcerting of all was his suggestion that parole officers actively seek to entrap their parolees.

I was stunned by the Senator's basic lack of understanding about our jobs and by his ignorance as to how his bill would negatively impact the important public safety work we do to protect our communities.

I have asked Division 236 Council Leader Tony Perez to help educate the Senator and the legislature about our work. You can help by contacting Tony at: vperez@pef.org and by emailing or calling Senator Benjamin and Assemblyman Mosley to express your concerns about this terrible legislation.

Senator Benjamin: bbenjamin@nyssenate.gov; (518) 426-6809
Assemblyman Mosley: mosleyw@nyassembly.gov; (518) 455-5325

#Winningthefuturetogether #UnionStrong #union #NYSPEF #PEF



PAROLE NEWSLETTER

