



Illinois General Assembly

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State Reps. Coladipietro, Reboletti Introduce Legislation to Crack Down on Gang Violence

Addison, IL....State Representatives Franco Coladipietro (R-Bloomington) and Dennis Reboletti (R-Elmhurst) have joined together to introduce a comprehensive legislative package imposing tough, new penalties for gang offenses.

While much of the new legislation increases criminal penalties for various gang-related crimes, emphasis of the proposed package is placed on prohibiting gang members from recruiting students in and around school grounds.

Both representatives are sponsoring House Bill 434, a measure that will make it a felony to recruit people to join gangs on or adjacent to school property.

“Gangs are using our schools as a resource to recruit new members,” Coladipietro said. “Currently there is nothing to stop gang members at school from inviting or encouraging other students to join their gang. Our legislation would cut off that feeding source by cracking down on any type of gang recruitment on or near school grounds.”

As a prosecutor, Reboletti has observed gangs’ negative influence expand in big cities like Chicago. However, recent reports conclude gangs are infiltrating collar suburbs and even rural areas, he said. As part of the new legislative package, Reboletti is sponsoring House Bill 447 which will require outlawing gang recruitment on the Internet.

“Gangs have now infiltrated the Internet. Many have sites posting their colors and boundaries and even glorifying members who have been killed. The worst part is that the Internet affords them access to our children in our own homes,” Reboletti said. “Cracking down on these online gang activities is another key component to keeping gang influence out of our communities and away from our children.”

DuPage County State’s Attorney, Joe Birkett, also extends his support of the legislation as another step in decreasing gang crimes in Illinois.

“Street gangs have become a blight on our communities. They have infiltrated our neighborhoods and schools, preying on and recruiting children,” Birkett said. “I support any law that will reduce and hopefully eliminate this blight. My Office has always been a leader in addressing gang crimes - I was the first State’s Attorney to file a civil lawsuit against a street gang, and I will continue to fight against street gangs using every tool the law provides.”

Coladipietro added that by increasing penalties and imposing new laws to help keep violent gang offenders in prison longer, communities will be able to reduce crimes associated with gangs. In addition, local authorities will be provided new tools allowing them to focus on offering prevention and intervention programs for at-risk youth to make sure they never become engaged in gang activities.

“We must continue to send a strong message that gangs will not be tolerated in Illinois. There will be consequences for every gang offense, including the first one, to demonstrate our commitment to ridding our communities of thugs and bullies,” Coladipietro said. “We must also focus on preventing youth from joining gangs and also intervening with those who need extra guidance to get their lives back on the right path.”

Reboletti and Coladipietro are also co-sponsoring House Bill 444 which creates enhanced penalties for criminal damages to government-supported crime fighting property such as police vehicles and surveillance cameras.

Other components of the anti-crime package include:

- Isolating street gang members from each other by prohibiting gang members from contacting each other while on parole or probation;
- Strengthening aggravated unlawful use of a weapon by non-felon gang members from a Class 4 felony to a Class 2 felony;
- Increasing prison time for repeat gang-related felony offenses; and
- Making gang-related felonies against police, firefighters and other first responders Truth in Sentencing offenses.

The legislation was unveiled today at a press conference at the Addison Municipal Complex.

For more information, contact Rep. Coladipietro at (630) 582-0045 or Rep. Reboletti at (630) 530-2730.

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