



# ULSTER COUNTY LEGISLATIVE NEWS

ULSTER COUNTY NEWS INFORMATION  
ULSTER COUNTY LEGISLATURE  
244 FAIR STREET, KINGSTON, NY 12401

PHONE: 845-340-3900  
FAX: 845-340-3651  
[www.ulstercountyny.gov](http://www.ulstercountyny.gov)

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE.**

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## **Ulster County Legislators Ask Executive Ryan to Join Ongoing Criminal Justice Reform Efforts**

KINGSTON, NY— Ulster County Legislators were blindsided by County Executive Ryan's announcement that he plans to create a "new" Ulster County Justice and Reform Commission and are asking for clarification of how he envisions it melding with the ongoing efforts of the Ulster County Criminal Justice Reform Task Force.

Ryan pointed to Governor Cuomo's June 12 Executive Order: New York State Police Reform and Reinvention Collaborative as the catalyst for his announcement of a "new" commission.

But Legislators who have been working with community stakeholders on several fronts for months and have actively engaged them in the Ulster County Criminal Justice Reform Task Force since the first of the year feel this is counterproductive.

"Religious leaders, members of the law enforcement and community activist are already engaged and working to address reform" said David Donaldson (D-Kingston), Chairman of the Legislature. "This has been a community wide effort and this announcement ignores these community members, their dedication and hard work at a time when we need their support even more."

Donaldson pointed to a variety of programs including the Ulster County Restorative Justice and Community Empowerment Center in Downtown Kingston, alternative sentencing programs, employment and training of displaced workers and other recent reforms.

Legislator Eve Walter (D-New Paltz), Chairwoman of the Ulster County Criminal Justice Reform Task Force and the Legislature's Law Enforcement and Public Safety Committee agrees.

The current Ulster County Criminal Justice Reform Task force has discussed the equitable implementation of a variety state reforms such as the "Raise the Age" legislation and bail reform.

In addition to Chairwoman Eve Walter, membership includes the District Attorney David Clegg, Acting Public Defender Clifford Owens, Legislative Minority Leader Ken Ronk (R-Shawangunk), Nancy Schmidt, Director of Probation, Lieutenant Joseph Sciutto, Ulster County Sheriff's Office, Tyrone Wilson, Commissioner of Human Rights, and City of Kingston Alderwoman Rita Worthington. Ex



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Officio members include Sheriff Juan Figueroa, Dian Katz, Program Director, One80, Family of Woodstock, Andrew Kossover, President, NYS Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers, Kim Mapes, Youth and Family Engagement Coordinator of the Ulster County Restorative Justice and Empowerment Center and Judge Robert Vosper, former Town Justice, Town of Rosendale.

The Task force has only been meeting for a few months but Walter points to the impact this dynamic group is already having on issues like bail and discovery reform. She feels there is a real opportunity to build on their success to develop a county restorative justice model and find meaningful reforms within law enforcement.

“These Task Force members are already engaged and working within the community. They know the players; they know the problems and they are aggressively pursuing reforms of the criminal justice system to ensure long term social and economic justice for all Ulster County residents,” said Walter.

Legislators suggest that working with the existing Task Force rather than duplicating this effort or working at cross purpose would be more efficient and effective. They feel the County Executive would be wise to join and expand this effort rather than trying to duplicate it. They point to the resolution that created the Task force inviting the Executive’s office to “provide the assistance of such departments that he or she deems appropriate.”

Sheriff Figueroa agrees that one Task Force focused on reform would be best.

“We need a unified front that includes all people involved,” said Sheriff Figueroa.

Donaldson agreed. “Two committees with similar names and missions is not only confusing, it is a waste of valuable resources and time we can’t spare. We need to work together at every level of government.”

Walters invites anyone interested in joining this conversation to dial into the next Ulster County Criminal Justice Reform Task Force meeting on Wednesday, June 24 at 4:30 (Powered by Zoom Dial 646-558-8656, Meeting ID 929 3326 8023).

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