



NEW YORK STATE SENATE DEMOCRATIC MAJORITY

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Senate Majority to Pass Legislation to Improve Limousine Safety and Protect Passengers

(Albany, NY) Today, the Senate Majority will advance legislation to strengthen limousine safety protocols to ensure passengers and operators are protected on their journeys. The proposed bills will include measures to improve limousine safety standards and bring the State’s Safe Limo website in line with the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration’s SAFER site; enforce a vehicle retirement threshold at ten years or 350K miles; require that limos be equipped with emergency tools like window break devices and fire extinguishers, as well as be outfitted with roll-over protection devices like cages and anti-intrusion bars; increase penalties for operators who disobey inspections and get unsafe commercial vehicles off the road; and extend the Stretch Limousine Passenger Safety Task Force.

Limousines are the vehicle of choice for many important milestones and celebrations. However, they present unique and particular challenges that can drastically affect the safety of those using them. This package of legislation is part of an ongoing effort to improve oversight and enforcement of the industry, so that their operation remains as safe as possible. New Yorkers understand the importance and urgency of this issue in the wake of the 2015 Long Island accident where four individuals were killed, and the 2018 Schoharie crash where 20 lives were lost—making it the deadliest U.S. road accident in nearly 20 years. This legislative package is part of an ongoing effort to prevent the same mistakes from happening again, and avert future tragedies by improving the State’s approach to limo regulation. These bills are an important step in addressing current concerns and incorporating the recommendations that came from diligent work by the Passenger Safety Task Force that the Senate worked to create in 2020.

Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins said, “Our state will never be made whole from the horrific limo crashes of 2015 and 2018. The least we can do is enact stronger, smarter regulations that will prevent these types of tragedies from happening in the future, while modeling first-rate safety protocols for other states and the Federal Government to follow. Every passenger and operator deserves to rent and enjoy limousines with the same level of trust as any other vehicle, and to know that the companies behind the scenes are being held to the letter of the law. I want to thank the State Limo Task Force for their careful recommendations, and the bill sponsors for ensuring these crucial provisions become the standard throughout New York.”

Chair of the Senate Transportation Committee and Bill sponsor, Senator Tim Kennedy, said, "These comprehensive policies build on the meaningful limo reforms the Democratic Conference advanced and enacted in 2020, and are a direct reflection of the advocacy and determination of families of the victims involved in the limo crashes in Schoharie and Cutchogue. By once again strengthening limo safety standards across New York State, we are ensuring passenger safety is prioritized, and creating greater oversight and accountability within the industry. I thank the State Limo Task Force for their hard work and thoughtful recommendations, as well as Majority Leader Andrea Stewart Cousins for fast-tracking the passage of this important legislation."

The legislation being passed includes:

- **Strengthening Limo Safety Ratings:** This bill, S1371, sponsored by Senator Neil Breslin, improves the Safe Limo safety rating system to line it up more closely with the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration's SAFER system and compare three years' worth of data.
- **Limousine Safety Briefing Requirements:** This bill, S1367, sponsored by Senator Monica Martinez, creates a pre-trip safety briefing for passengers, similar to those administered for airline passengers or other commercial rides.
- **Vehicle Retirement Thresholds:** This bill, S1443A, sponsored by Senator Michelle Hinchey, ages out stretch limousine vehicles at 350,000 miles or 10 years—whichever comes first—with exceptions for antiques, show cars, and similar vehicles.
- **Equipping Limos with Emergency Tools:** This bill, S1442, sponsored by Senator Jessica Scarcella-Spanton, requires stretch limos to be equipped with window break tools as well as operational fire extinguishers, and have them incorporated into the inspection process.
- **Requiring Roll-Over Protection Devices:** This bill, S1368, sponsored by Senator Tim Kennedy, requires stretch limousines to be equipped with roll-over protection and anti-intrusion devices—including cages, pillars, and anti-intrusion bars—to better protect rear compartment passengers in the event of a crash.
- **Increased Penalties for Disobeying Inspections and Expanded Seizure of Unsafe Vehicles:** This bill, S1370A, sponsored by Senator Tim Kennedy, strengthens penalties when a stretch limousine has failed an inspection but an operator still uses the vehicle. It also authorizes the seizure and redemption of the unlawfully operated and unsafe commercial vehicles by an officer, and requires the vehicle information to be entered into the New York statewide police information network as an impounded vehicle.
- **Extending the Stretch Limousine Passenger Safety Task Force:** This bill, S1369, sponsored by Senator Tim Kennedy, extends the Stretch Limousine Passenger Safety Task Force's operations by extending it to December 31, 2024. It also directs the Task Force to continue to hold whatever public hearings and meetings are necessary to review the State's implementations

of the original Task Force report that was released in October 2022. It will provide recommendations and an updated report on its findings by April 15, 2024.

Bill sponsor Senator Neil Breslin said, "This legislative package is critical to ensuring that limousine operators and their passengers are kept safe. In the wake of the 2018 Schoharie crash that tragically took the lives of 20 innocent people it became apparent that we had to make sure that an accident like this never happens again. I want to applaud the leadership of both Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins, the chairperson of the Senate Transportation Committee Tim Kennedy, as well as the advocates and the victims families for their staunch advocacy on these critically important limousine safety bills."

Bill sponsor Senator Michelle Hinchey said, "My bill to retire old and under maintained limousines is a lifesaving change that will make our roads safer and rightfully hold the limo industry to a higher standard. We will never come close to diminishing the pain of families whose loved ones were taken from them in the tragic Schoharie and Long Island limousine crashes, but my colleagues and I will do everything in our power to establish new safety standards so that no family ever has to endure the same tragedy from these preventable accidents."

Bill Sponsor Senator Monica Martinez said, "The Senate Majority has taken bold steps to strengthen and improve the safety of limousines and I am proud to be part of it. Limousines are often chosen as a mode of transportation for events and leisure to alleviate road safety concerns. The tragic 2015 Cutchogue crash where four young women were killed while four were injured, and the horrific 2018 Schoharie crash, where twenty lives were lost, is not something any family should have to endure. This legislative package is an effort to prevent further accidents from occurring. Bill S1367 which I am proud to sponsor, creates a pre-trip safety briefing for passengers, similar to those administered for airline passengers or other commercial rides. The intent of its implementation is to safeguard passengers by providing proactive information to aid in preventing future tragedies in our communities."

Bill sponsor Senator Jessica Scarcella-Spanton said, "Checks and balances are crucial when it comes to traffic safety and assuring the passenger vehicles that we use on a daily basis are inspected appropriately, this includes our personal vehicles, public transit and especially vehicles that our loved ones rent for special occasions. Families should not have to question the safety of any vehicle traveling on our roadways. I am proud to have sponsored legislation that establishes additional equipment requirements for stretch limousines to increase safety for passengers."

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