



Hard to see progress after USMNT makes same old exit

SPORTS, 1B

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Report: Systemic oversight failures plague NY prisons



Demanding justice and change, Unified Black Caucus, along with Live and Direct On the Air (Freedom is a Must), held a rally for Robert Brooks outside of Marcy Correctional Facility Jan. 14, 2025. DANIEL DELOACH/UTICA OBSERVER-DISPATCH

Emily Barnes
New York State Team
USA TODAY NETWORK

A deep dive into several Department of Corrections and Community Supervision facilities across New York revealed oversight, discipline and accountability issues in the state's prisons, prompting calls for an overhaul of the system.

Following the death of Robert Brooks at Marcy Correctional Facility in December 2024 and through the death of

Messiah Nantwi at Mid-State Correctional Facility in March 2025, DOCCS hired a law firm to conduct a review of its operations "to identify any potential systemic issues."

The probe revealed striking problems in New York prisons, ranging from misuse of force and insufficient training to a lack of discipline and mental health support.

WilmerHale interviewed several currently and formerly incarcerated individuals, current and former DOCCS staff, facility leadership and executive

leadership, surveyed hundreds of incarcerated individuals and staff at Marcy, Mid-State, Sing Sing and Gouverneur correctional facilities and made multiple visits to Marcy and Mid-State throughout the review process.

"It is important to recognize that meaningful change will require sustained leadership, additional financial, technological, and staff resources, and an executive and legislative commitment to achieving long-term safety,

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Volunteer fire chief remembered for heroism

Mike Randall
Middletown Times Herald-Record
USA TODAY NETWORK

David A. Gagnon, chief of the Cottekill Volunteer Fire Company, is being remembered for his dedication and leadership after he died while helping to remove a tree from a roadway in the Town of Rosendale.

Just after 3 p.m. on July 3, the Cottekill Fire District, including Gagnon, responded to a report of a tree in the roadway.

A portion of the tree unexpectedly snapped and struck Gagnon.

Fellow Cottekill firefighters, assisted by members of the Bloomington Fire District, Marletown First Aid, the Ulster County Sheriff's office and the Rosendale Police Department, immediately initiated life-saving measures.

Despite those efforts, Gagnon died from his injuries.

In a statement, the Cottekill Volunteer Fire District said, "Chief Gagnon faithfully served the Cottekill Fire District and his community with dedication, leadership and commitment. His passing is a profound loss to his family, fellow firefighters, the department and the community."

"Chief Gagnon dedicated his life to serving others, which was easily demonstrated through his exemplary service over many years," the Ulster County Sheriff's Office said in a statement. "Please keep his family and fellow firefighters in your thoughts and prayers while they grieve his profound loss. May he rest in peace."

Among the many other community organizations Gagnon was involved with was the Ulster County Regional Chamber of Commerce.

In a Facebook post, the chamber said it was "saddened beyond words

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Motorcyclist, 18, dies after crossing into oncoming lane

Mike Randall
Middletown Times Herald-Record
USA TODAY NETWORK

New York State Police said a motorcyclist died July 2 in a collision with a car on state Route 52 in the Town of Wawarsing in Ulster County.

According to state police, a preliminary investigation determined that just before 7:20 p.m. on July 2, a 2024 Yamaha motorcycle was traveling west on

Route 52 at an unsafe speed when, for unknown reasons, the motorcycle operator lost control of his vehicle.

The motorcycle slid on its side and crossed into the eastbound lane, where it collided with a 2021 Toyota and ultimately slid under that vehicle.

The Toyota, in an attempt to avoid the motorcycle, steered to the right, crossed over the roadway hazard markings and struck a rock barrier.

The operator of the motorcycle,

identified as Ryan M. Conklin, 18, of Spring Glen, a hamlet in the Town of Wawarsing, was ejected from the motorcycle and was pronounced dead at the scene.

The driver of the Toyota, a 57-year-old Pine Bush woman, and two passengers, a 77-year-old woman and a 79-year-old man, both of Milford, Pennsylvania, were transported to Ellenville Regional Hospital, where they were treated for minor injuries.

State police said their investigation of the collision is continuing. Anyone who witnessed the collision or has information relevant to the investigation is asked to call the State Police Bureau of Criminal Investigation in Ellenville at 845-344-5300 and reference case number NY2600825120.

Mike Randall covers breaking news for the Times Herald-Record and the Poughkeepsie Journal. Reach him at mrandall@th-record.com.

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