

New York Post

Judge's bail ruling of little matter

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He would have been free anyway.

Sources close to the Brooklyn judge who's been pilloried for releasing a low-level drug perp who allegedly turned cop killer last week say Lamont Pride would've been free within days even if she'd held him on bail.

While Mayor Bloomberg has criticized Judge Evelyn LaPorte for not "doing more" to keep Pride, 27, behind bars, courthouse sources noted that he was in on a small time charge on a "very weak case."

That case began when cops ran across Pride while executing a search warrant looking for drugs in a Brooklyn apartment. They found six small bags of what appeared to be crack, but they weren't on Pride's body and he didn't live in the apartment.

Prosecutors asked that he be held on \$2,500 bail, but LaPorte released him without bail. The sources said he would have been freed six days later anyway, because prosecutors missed their deadline to turn in reports showing that the substance found in the apartment was indeed crack.

"He would have been in the street anyway," one source said.

The sources stressed that they weren't blaming the DA's office - and that if there's any fingerpointing to be done, it should be aimed down towards North Carolina, where Pride was wanted for shooting a person in the foot. Officials there didn't consider it a large enough offense to extradict him from another state.

The sources were also outraged that Bloomberg was putting blame on the judge, who's legally prohibited from speaking publicly about the case.

"She has respect for the law and the rules," the source said, and "it's inherently unfair for politicians to attack someone who they know can't say anything on their own behalf."

By singling LaPorte out, Bloomberg "threw a Molotov cocktail on the situation," another source said.

"It was reckless rhetoric."

"It's fascinating there's so much time focused on her, and so little focused on this scum" who killed Officer Peter Figoski, the source said.

In recent days, LaPorte has been subjected to threatening phone calls, letters and emails, and now has police protection outside her home, the source said, adding, "It's been real nasty stuff."

Sources said safety concerns led her to miss work on Friday. She was also off on Thursday, but the source said that had been a long planned day off because she was taking her Alzheimer's stricken sister to the doctor.

The source said the judge considered all the factors she was supposed to when setting bail, and, by law, that cannot include whether the suspect may be a danger to society.

"[Pride] was facing so little time, he couldn't be considered a flight risk," the source said. "If these politicians want to do something useful, they should work on changing the law so judges can consider whether the person might be a danger."

When asked for comment last night, a spokesman for Patrolmen's Benevolent Association President Patrick Lynch referred The Post to Lynch's remarks last week after Pride's arraignment:

"This person should never have been allowed onto the streets of New York. The violent history this perp had was enough to hold him, but nonetheless that judge released him onto the streets and his violence continued and he killed a New York City police officer."

A City Hall spokesman did not return a request for comment last night.

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