



Flanagan Says 'Raise The Age' Will Be Part of Budget Talks

By Nick Niedzwiedek Politico February 22, 2017

ALBANY — The Senate's top Republican said Wednesday that a proposal to raise the age of criminal responsibility will be a big part of the coming budget talks.

Democrats and progressive criminal justice activists have been pushing the issue for years, as New York is one of only two states to try 16- and 17-year-olds as adults for nonviolent offenses. Previous attempts at passing such legislation have sputtered in the GOP-controlled state Senate, but the conference has been [open to discussions](#) this session.

"Sometimes these issues, they percolate in one year and don't seem to get to the forefront. This is clearly going to be a very significant component of the budget," Senate Majority Leader John Flanagan said of the "Raise the Age" proposal in a gaggle with reporters after a radio interview at the Capitol.

Assembly Speaker Carl Heastie last week said criminal justice reform would be "a pretty serious part" of budget discussions, but he [would not say](#) if he'd hold up the budget over it. Sen. Velmanette Montgomery, a Democrat who sponsors one proposal, has said she believes budget negotiations offer the most leverage, given Heastie and Gov. Andrew Cuomo's support for the proposal.

Flanagan conceded that the issue is "an extremely complicated area" for his members and said they are internally hashing out a plan they would bless.

"I think this is an issue of utmost importance to the people of the state of New York, and we have literally some very strong feelings and some members in our conference who have extraordinary knowledge and background," he said.

The Independent Democratic Conference has made raising the age one of its legislative priorities for this session, and mainline Democrats [have been pressuring](#) the breakaway group [to deliver](#).

The Senate and Assembly are preparing their budget proposals ahead of the April 1 deadline for a final agreement.