



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR
Robert G. Ortt

Senate Heroin Task Force Co-Chairs Call on Assembly to Join Them in Fight Against Heroin Epidemic

ROBERT G. ORTT July 9, 2015

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In the wake of a [study](#) released earlier this week by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) that shows a dramatic rise in heroin use and overdose deaths, the co-chairs of the Senate Task Force on Heroin and Opioid Addiction are calling on the Assembly Majority to join the Senate in passing a package of legislation that would help eradicate the heroin epidemic.

From 2002-04, 379,000 Americans reported using heroin within a 12 month period. According to the study made public this week, that number has increased to 663,000 Americans in 2011-2013, with overdose deaths nearly doubling.

The Task Force, co-chaired by Senators Rob Ortt (R,C,I – North Tonawanda), George A. Amedore, Jr. (R,C,I – Rotterdam) and Senator Terrence Murphy (R,C,I – Yorktown), put forward a package of bills, that were passed by the state Senate earlier this year, that would enhance treatment options, help decrease heroin overdoses, and put more drug dealers behind bars for dealing heroin and other dangerous opioids. The Assembly failed to consider the legislation.

“The CDC study offers a detailed, comprehensive analysis on the dramatic rise of heroin use in the U.S.,” said **Senator Ortt**. “It confirms what we’ve heard in our community – from users, parents, police officers, and doctors. Heroin use and abuse is cutting across all demographics to affect people of all ages, ethnicities, geographic regions, and social classes. I’m encouraged by the work we accomplished this past legislative session, but more work remains. My colleagues and I are committed to working toward meaningful legislation that will hold drug dealers accountable, expand treatment options, and better protect New Yorkers.”

“For many people, the results from the CDC study on heroin use in the United States was staggering, but the unfortunate reality is that it only echoed what we have heard at our task force hearings,” said **Senator Murphy**. “The CDC identified the impact individual states can have on heroin use, abuse, dependence and overdose. This past legislative session my colleagues in the Senate passed comprehensive and necessary measures, which would have addressed crucial aspects of recovery as well as potential laws, which would help get drug dealers off of our streets. I join my fellow co-chairs in urging our counterparts in the Assembly to pass the legislative package we crafted, which will have an immediate impact on New York’s ability to successfully combat heroin and opioid abuse.”

“The CDC study released earlier this week echoes what we have heard throughout the state at public forums held by the Task Force – there is not one person who is not affected by this deadly epidemic,” said **Senator Amedore**. “We need to do everything possible to address this epidemic to make sure there are proper treatment and recovery options available, that we are promoting effective prevention and education efforts, and that we are properly punishing the dealers that are bringing these drugs onto our streets. The Senate passed comprehensive package of bills earlier this year, and I urge my colleagues in the Assembly to join us in passing this needed legislation.”

The bills passed by the Senate earlier this year would:

- Allow law enforcement officials to charge a drug dealer with homicide if a person overdoses on heroin or an opiate-controlled substance sold to them by that dealer (S.4163, Senator Amedore);
- Expand the crime of operating as a major trafficker (S.4177, Senator Murphy);
- Make it easier for dealers to be charged with intent to sell (S.100, Senator Boyle);
- Improve safety at judicial diversion programs (S.1901, Senator Bonacic);
- Prevent the sale of synthetic opioids (S.1640, Senator Klein);
- Establish assisted outpatient treatment for substance use disorders (S.631, Senator Carlucci);
- Create a Prescription Pain Medication Awareness Program (S.4348, Senator Hannon);
- Create drug-free zones on grounds of treatment centers (S.4023, Senator Skelos);
- Make Kendra's Law permanent (S.4722, Senator Young);
- Criminalize the illegal transport of opiate controlled substances (S.608, Senator Boyle);
- Establishes the option for a youth, suffering from substance abuse to be adjudicated as a person in need of supervision (S.3237, Senator Martins); and
- Increase the effectiveness of abuse prevention (S.2847, Senator Lanza).

The package of bills builds on the Senate legislation successfully enacted last year as a result of the Task Force's efforts. In addition, the 2015-16 State Budget provided significant funding for programs targeting the heroin crisis, including: \$7.8 million in funding for statewide prevention, treatment and recovery services; \$450,000 to purchase Narcan kits given out for free to individuals who participate in a Narcan training class; and \$140,000 to finance the cost of Narcan kits for staff and nurses authorized to administer Narcan in the event of a heroin or opioid overdose at school.

The Senate Task Force held four forums throughout the state earlier this year, and intends to hold more in the fall. They will issue a report with recommendations for further legislative action to address concerns raised by law enforcement, treatment providers, health and mental health experts, and victims' advocates that participated in the forum.