



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR  
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## Rockefeller Drug Law Reforms Are In Effect

ERIC T. SCHNEIDERMAN October 6, 2009

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Today is a historic day for the state of New York as the Rockefeller drug law reforms finally go into effect. Now, the failed drug policies of the past are replaced with a smarter approach that will make our communities stronger and safer.

For 35 years, the Rockefeller Drug Laws were a one-size-fits-all punitive approach that failed to allow for the rehabilitation of non-violent addicted offenders and wasted billions of dollars. They devastated families and tore communities apart. As a result of the Rockefeller laws, the rate of recidivism for drug crimes reached approximately 60 percent, unnecessarily costing taxpayers millions of dollars every year instead of ending the cycle of addiction and helping people return to society as functioning, contributing citizens.

For all the (fair) criticism of Albany's dysfunction, our state government did get something right this year.

As Chairman of the Codes Committee and a longtime sponsor of legislation to repeal the Rockefeller drug laws, I was proud to lead the Senate Democrats this spring in voting to expand drug treatment as an alternative to prison, give judges more discretion to divert drug-addicted individuals convicted of non-violent drug crimes to treatment, and increase penalties for drug kingpins. The changes that go into effect today will also make approximately 1,100 individuals statewide who are currently serving long sentences for non-violent drug crimes eligible for re-sentencing.

It has been a long, frustrating road attempting to change these unjust laws. I have been fighting alongside families and advocates for years to make a real, transformative difference.

Now we finally have legislation in effect that reverses New York's pattern of under-treating and over-incarcerating individuals who commit non-violent drug crimes.

With these reforms, we've ushered in the beginning of a new, smart-on-crime era for New York, and for the rest of the nation. It will make our communities safer, save money and, most importantly, save lives.