



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Thomas F. O'Mara

O'Mara's legislation targets possession, sale and manufacturing of methamphetamine

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Albany, N.Y., April 27--State Senator Tom O'Mara (R-C, Big Flats), highlighting the dramatic rise in methamphetamine-related arrests and other incidents across the region over the past year, announced today that he has introduced legislation in the Senate to significantly increase the criminal penalties for possessing, selling or manufacturing the dangerous and highly addictive drug.

"We've seen an alarming and a troubling increase across the Southern Tier and Finger Lakes regions over the past year in the incidents of addiction, violence and tragedy that are the by-products of rampant methamphetamine production and use," said O'Mara. "The officers of the Southern Tier Methamphetamine Task Force continue to do outstanding work to protect our communities and I'm hopeful that these tougher new laws will help in the prosecution and punishment of meth crimes. We can't sit back and allow our region or anywhere else in New York State to serve as a safe harbor for meth labs, meth addicts or meth pushers. The risks are too great and the consequences too overwhelming for the safety of our neighborhoods, our police officers and our first responders, to say nothing of local systems of health care, criminal justice and social services."

According to a 2009 report from the Rand Corporation, the economic cost of meth use in the United States reached nearly \$24 billion in 2005 and could go as high as \$48 billion.

The legislation has been introduced in the Assembly by Assemblyman Kevin Smardz (R-Erie County) and is co-sponsored by local Assemblyman Phil Palmesano (R-C, Corning).

If enacted, the measures being introduced in the Senate by O'Mara would:

- increase the criminal penalties for the possession of methamphetamine manufacturing material and the unlawful manufacture of methamphetamine, implementing a series of increasingly severe felony offenses.

O'Mara stressed that meth manufacturing involves the use of highly explosive, flammable and toxic chemicals, and meth labs pose a significant public health and safety threat, especially if they're located in residential neighborhoods; and

- in a similar fashion, increase the criminal penalties for the possession and/or sale of methamphetamine to bring the penalties more in line with the penalties for possessing and/or selling cocaine and heroin.

"These actions would make it easier to prosecute meth crimes and impose tougher criminal penalties to punish meth convicts," said O'Mara. "We also hope tougher anti-meth laws will act as a stronger deterrent among our young people at risk of falling prey to this cycle of addiction and tragedy."

O'Mara said that the Legislature and then-Governor George Pataki enacted New York's first comprehensive anti-meth law in early 2006 following the release of a State Commission on Investigation (SIC) report warning that methamphetamine would become an increasingly dire public health and safety threat unless New York adopted new and tougher laws to combat the drug's proliferation. The 2006 report, "Methamphetamine Use & Manufacture," cautioned that the drug's rapidly growing use and manufacture posed "an urgent threat to public health and safety and without new and tougher laws to combat the threat, New York could become a haven for methamphetamine users and manufacturers." It identified the Southern Tier as a hotbed of criminal meth activity.

"We need to heed that warning once again and ensure that our laws are keeping pace with the goal of putting meth manufacturers and sellers out of business in New York State," O'Mara said.