



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

John J. Flanagan

Senator Flanagan Votes To Pass “I-STOP” To Fight Prescription Drug Abuse

JOHN J. FLANAGAN June 19, 2012

| ISSUE: **PRESCRIBED DRUGS OR PRESCRIPTIONS**



THE LANDMARK **I-STOP LAW**

Saving Lives by Preventing
Prescription Drug Abuse

In an effort to fight the escalating problem of prescription drug abuse, Senator John Flanagan (2nd Senate District) joined with his colleagues in the Senate recently to unanimously pass legislation that will make significant changes to the way prescription drugs are distributed and monitored in New York State. The legislation, which Senator Flanagan co-sponsored, will create the Internet System for Tracking Over-Prescribing (“I-

STOP”) Act and include “real time” prescription tracking to provide more information to doctors and pharmacists, in an effort to prevent deaths from abuse and overdoses of prescription drugs, particularly painkillers.

The bill (S.7637) was also approved in the Assembly and will be sent to Governor Andrew Cuomo to be signed into law.

“With the abuse of prescription drugs continuing to have a tremendous impact on the lives of so many families in our region and our state, this legislation will provide greater accountability and oversight. Passage of I-STOP also sends a strong message to the organizations that provide treatment and assistance to addicts and their families that New York State is a committed partner in the fight against drug abuse. I applaud Governor Cuomo, Leader Skelos and Speaker Silver for working together for the good of everyone in our state,” stated Senator John Flanagan.

The abuse of prescription medication has become the nation's fastest-growing drug problem according to the Office of National Drug Control Policy. According to the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), nearly 15,000 people die every year of overdoses due to prescription painkillers. In 2010, 1 in 20 people in the United States over the age of 11 reported using prescription painkillers for nonmedical reasons in the past year.

In New York State, that effect is also greatly felt and has led to some notorious incidents.

One year ago on June 19, 2011, David Laffer shot four and killed four people at a drug store in Medford as he stole 11,000 prescription hydrocodone pills. In North Buffalo, Michael D. Israel, 20, killed himself on June 4, 2011 via a self-inflicted gunshot wound because of his addiction to prescription drugs. And last week, 100 people were arrested in a coordinated law enforcement sweep targeting illegal prescription drug use in New York City and Long Island.

The provisions of the legislation include:

- Creating a modernized and improved “real time” Prescription Monitoring Program (I-STOP) that practitioners and pharmacists can securely and easily access, allowing them to view their patients' controlled substance histories;
- Requiring e-prescribing, making New York a national leader by being one of the first states to move from paper prescriptions to a system mandating electronic prescribing;
- Updating controlled substance schedules to align New York’s Controlled Substances Act with Federal Law and changing the schedules for hydrocodone compounds and tramadol to reduce abuse;
- Enhancing the Prescription Pain Medication Awareness Program to educate the public and health care practitioners about the risks associated with prescribing and taking controlled substance pain medications; and
- Establishing a Safe Disposal Program to increase the options available to safely dispose of unused controlled substances and prevent people who abuse prescription painkillers from obtaining them from friends or relatives.