



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patrick M. Gallivan

State Enacts New Measure to Combat Bath Salts

PATRICK M. GALLIVAN September 27, 2013

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A Column By Sen. Patrick M. Gallivan

Like everything in the United States, drug use and abuse has evolved alongside the ebb and flow of larger American culture. The sixties and seventies saw the rise in recreational use of marihuana and psychedelics like LSD. Later cocaine become a popular substance of choice, and along with it, the development of crack cocaine – a compound so addictive and destructive that many communities are still struggling to recover from the crack epidemic of the late eighties and early nineties that devastated neighborhoods and urban centers across the country. More recently, we have experienced an increase in heroin and synthetic opioid use along with designer drugs like ecstasy and methamphetamine.

For over 20 years – as a cop on the beat, as a captain with the State Police and as Sheriff of Erie County – I witnessed the evolution of narcotic use in our community from the front lines and I understand the consequences that exist when lawmakers and law enforcement are cautious in their response to an escalating problem.

Drug abuse, and the violent crime and social decay that comes with it, is a constant threat. The rapidly changing and increasingly sophisticated nature of the narcotic trade demands that law enforcement and lawmakers remain vigilant and proactive in their strategies and

tactics.

Last year the legislature and the Governor worked together to put forward one of the toughest laws in nation aimed to combat prescription drug abuse and addiction. The Internet System for Tracking Over-Prescribing, known as I-STOP, now mandates doctors consult a real-time electronic database before prescribing certain opioid and narcotic medications that are commonly abused.

Another emerging threat is the alarming abuse of substances commonly labeled as “bath salts.” Bath salts--man-made drugs similar to methamphetamines--can cause heart attacks, seizures, permanent brain damage and severe hallucinations. An individual's behavior on bath salts can turn violent, leading them to harm themselves or others.

Several high-profile incidents of bizarre behavior and even deaths involving the suspected use of bath salts have raised concern across the nation about these dangerous new substances, and I am proud report that earlier this month New York State, led by the Senate, acted with all due alacrity to enact tough new classifications that will add additional chemical compounds—the type of compounds used to make these bath salt drugs—to the state's banned substances list. The statute also imposes criminal penalties on those who sell, use or possess these drugs, and makes it a felony to sell the substances to a minor or on school grounds.

Drug use, abuse and addiction are constant threats to our families and our neighborhoods. My Senate colleagues and I are doing everything we can to improve our state laws to keep these treacherous drugs off the streets and prevent our young people from becoming victims.

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