



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

James L. Seward

## Seward Joins Task Force To Fight Rising Heroin Epidemic

JAMES L. SEWARD March 17, 2014

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**ALBANY, 03/17/14** -- State Senator James L. Seward (R/C/I – Oneonta) today announced that he was named to the newly created Senate Task Force on Heroin and Opioid Addiction. The task force will examine the rise in use of heroin and other opioids in New York State and develop recommendations for treating and preventing addiction.

**“Heroin use has reached epidemic proportions,”** said Senator Seward. **“Law enforcement resources are being stretched thin, public health costs are skyrocketing, and lives are being lost. Heroin is infiltrating all social, economic, and geographic sectors of our state and we need to take**

**definitive action to halt this ugly trend.”**

The bipartisan task force will examine the issues and solicit input from experts and other stakeholders about addiction prevention and treatment options, the rise in heroin and opioid use, and the potential for drug-related crimes and other negative community impacts. The task force will then develop recommendations which will be used to draft legislation to address the issues raised.

**“New York State’s I-STOP controlled substance reporting system has successfully hindered the prescription drug black market. An unfortunate consequence has been a rise in heroin abuse. It is a crippling, highly-addictive drug that is turning up in all corners of the state,”** Seward added.

A 2012 federal survey on drug use and health reported that the number of people who said they used heroin in the past 12 months rose from 373,000 people in 2007 to 669,000 people in 2012.

In the senate’s budget resolution passed last week, \$5 million was proposed for increased heroin prevention, treatment, and recovery support services. The resolution also included a measure to increase the penalties for drug dealers by making it a class B felony for anyone to possess 50 or more individual packets of heroin and/or an amount of heroin with an aggregate value of at least \$300.

The task force will also examine the crimes that accompany increases in illegal drug activity. In February, the New York Times reported that the federal Drug Enforcement Administration’s (DEA) heroin seizures in New York State increased 67 percent over the last four years. The DEA’s New York office “seized 144 kilograms of heroin, nearly 20 percent of its seizures nationwide, valued at roughly \$43 million.”

**“It is important that we advance a multi-prong strategy that will help break the stranglehold this drug has on those who are addicted and punishes drug dealers who trade in this poison,”** Senator

Seward concluded.