



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

Surge in Heroin Is Focus of Friday Forum in Watertown

PATTY RITCHIE April 22, 2014

| ISSUE: **HEALTH, MENTAL HEALTH, CONTROLLED SUBSTANCES, DRUGS, PRESCRIBED DRUGS OR PRESCRIPTIONS**

Bipartisan Senate Task Force Gathering Experts to Tackle Growing Problem

In an effort to fight the growing problem of heroin usage, State Senator Patty Ritchie has announced she will host a public forum on heroin and opioid addiction in Watertown on Friday, April 25th.

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The forum is one of 13 being held across New York by a bipartisan task force created to solicit input on the rise in the use of heroin and opioids, and find solutions for treating and preventing addiction and its consequences. Senator Ritchie serves on the bipartisan Task Force.

“The surge in heroin use in rural communities and Upstate cities is alarming, and the Senate’s bipartisan task force is looking to the experts to help us find solutions, save lives and keep these drugs out of the hands of potential victims, especially young adults and children,” Senator Ritchie said.

The forum will include testimony from reformed addicts, treatment experts and a cross section of local law enforcement officials who will describe their first-hand experiences in dealing with heroin and opioid abuse, and how it has impacted Northern and Central New York.

“We’ve seen an alarming increase in the use of this deadly drug in Central and Northern New York and I believe that this forum will be especially helpful in giving me the opportunity to hear firsthand from those on the front lines about what can be done to combat this very serious problem.”

Heroin use, arrests and fatal overdoses are on the rise, as more young adults are turning to the drug, which is cheap and widely available in cities and rural communities across Upstate New York.

The Watertown forum is one of two being held on the same day in the North Country. The other is being hosted in Plattsburgh by Senator Betty Little. A Central New York forum was held last week by Senator Joe Griffo.

- WHO:** Senator Patty Ritchie, member of the bipartisan Senate Joint Task Force on Heroin and Opioid Addiction
- Recovering addicts, treatment experts and a cross-section of law enforcement
- WHAT:** Public forum on the growing heroin problem and possible legislative solutions
- WHEN:** Friday, April 25, 2014
1:00 pm
- WHERE:** 11th Floor Dulles State Office Building
317 Washington St., Watertown

The public is invited to submit written testimony to the panel. Those wishing to provide oral testimony must preregister by calling Senator Ritchie at (315) 782-3418.

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. The agency also reported that the number of people dependent on heroin rose, from 179,000 people in 2007 to 369,000 people in 2011.

According to the National Institutes of Health (NIH), in 2011, 4.2 million Americans aged 12 or older (or 1.6 percent) said they had used heroin at least once in their lives. The NIH estimates that approximately 23 percent of individuals who use heroin become dependent on this highly addictive drug.