



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Thomas F. O'Mara

## O'Mara: National Prescription Drug Take-Back Day Important in the Ongoing Fight Against Abuse

THOMAS F. O'MARA April 23, 2014

| ISSUE: **PRESCRIBED DRUGS OR PRESCRIPTIONS**



Elmira, N.Y., April 23—State Senator Tom O'Mara (R-C, Big Flats) reminded area residents today that Saturday, April 26, 2014 is National Prescription Drug Take-Back Day and law enforcement agencies across the Southern Tier and Finger Lakes regions will operate drop-off centers for people to anonymously dispose of their unused prescription drugs.

"It's incredibly important that our local law enforcement leaders continue to participate in National Prescription Drug Take-Back Day. Their ongoing leadership in this overall effort to combat prescription drug abuse makes all the difference," said O'Mara.

The annual event is coordinated by the federal Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) in partnership local police agencies across the nation.

On Saturday law enforcement agencies across the Southern Tier and Finger Lakes regions have established drop-off centers to allow people to anonymously dispose of unwanted prescription drugs between 10:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m. O'Mara said that full listing of local collection sites being offered throughout his legislative district covering Chemung, Schuyler, Steuben, Tompkins and Yates counties can be found on the DEA website, <http://www.justice.gov/dea/index.shtml>.

O'Mara also noted that Saturday's take-back day continues to complement a 2012 law that made New York State a national leader in the fight against prescription drug abuse. Two years ago the State Legislature and Governor Andrew Cuomo enacted a landmark law called the "Internet System for Tracking Over-Prescribing Act," commonly known as I-STOP. Among many provisions, I-STOP created a new and updated prescription monitoring program within the state Department of Health (DOH), recognized the need for increased education among health care providers about the potential for abuse of controlled substances, and required the DOH to establish a program for the safe disposal of unused controlled substances by consumers.

O'Mara strongly supported I-STOP's approval, noting that in 2010 over 22 million prescriptions for painkilling drugs were written in New York State – not including refills.

"That's a stunning figure, especially in a state where the entire population is less than twenty million," O'Mara said. "Prescription drug abuse is one of America's most alarming, tragic and urgent public health challenges. New York remains at the forefront of addressing it and attempting to save lives, especially young lives."

Illicit use of prescription medicine has become one of the nation's fastest-growing drug problems. 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. Moreover, an estimated 70 percent of people who abuse prescription painkillers obtained them from friends or relatives who originally received the medication from a prescription. The problem is of particular concern with respect to young adults and teens.