



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

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## Safety First Makes for a Perfect Prom

PATTY RITCHIE April 28, 2014

| ISSUE: **CONSTITUENTS CORNER**



### **Senator Ritchie's Weekly Column**

As the school year winds down, students are gearing up for what is often thought to be one of the highlights of high school—prom. While prom can be a great time, it's so important that students know that in order to have fun, they need to make safety a priority.

Recently, I had the opportunity to visit with students from Central Square High School before they headed out for the big night. While things have definitely changed since I was in their shoes, one thing has remained the same, and that's the pressures students face on prom night that put their health and safety at risk.

Before prom night, make it a point to sit down with your child to touch on these ways to have fun—while being safe:

***Plan the evening:*** Before prom night, it's a great idea to sit down with your teen and map out the evening. How will they get around? Where will they be going after? If they're traveling by limo, make sure the company is reputable. Also, lay out the ground rules for his or her curfew ahead of time so there's no debate the night of.

***Stress the dangers of drinking and drugs:*** It's likely that your teen already knows the dangers that drinking alcohol or using drugs present, but it can never hurt to drive that point home again. Make sure they know underage drinking is illegal and can lead to arrest, loss of scholarships or participation in school-related activities and even worse, injury.

***Safe and sober after-prom events:*** It goes without saying that many after-prom parties include drugs and alcohol. Encourage your teen to seek other options. Many teens will have the chance to attend after prom events—right at their school—that feature entertainment, games, prizes and more.

***Just a call away:*** Make sure your teen knows never to get into a vehicle with someone who has been drinking or using drugs. Let them know they can always call you—no questions asked—if they get in a jam.

If you're a parent, I encourage you to sit down with your teen to make sure they know how to stay safe during one of the highlights of high school. Best wishes to all prom-goers for a fun—and safe—experience.

*(Senator Ritchie is pictured in the attached photo with Central Square High School students Matthew Kurtz, Kayleigh McElwain, Joe Johnson, Madison Morley, Cullynn Morley and Kara Donegan)*