



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

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Press Advisory - Senator Seward to Hold Public Forum on Heroin Abuse

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SEWARD TO HOLD PUBLIC FORUM ON HEROIN ABUSE

Testimony from local stakeholders, community members will help guide state policy

ONEONTA, 04/14/14 -- State Senator James L. Seward (R/C/I – Oneonta) today announced that he will be hosting the Joint Senate Task Force on Heroin and Opioid Addiction on Monday, April 28 in Oneonta. The forum is one of twelve being held statewide to solicit local input on 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. **“Lives are being lost, our public healthcare system is being overburdened, and law enforcement resources are being stretched thin. Heroin is infiltrating all social, economic, and geographic sectors of our state and we need to take definitive action to halt this ugly trend.”**

Senator Seward will lead the task force forum and will be joined by Senator Phil Boyle (R/C/I – Suffolk County), the chairman of the Senate Committee on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse and chairman of the special task force. Experts in substance abuse and treatment, law enforcement, municipal officials, and individuals personally affected by heroin and opioid abuse will offer testimony at the forum. Attendees from the public will also have an opportunity to express their views and offer real-life examples of the damages caused by drug abuse.

“It is important that we formulate a multi-prong strategy that will break the stranglehold heroin has on so many people in our society. This series of statewide forums, featuring a diverse group of expert stakeholders, will play a vital role as we develop our line of attack against this growing epidemic,” Seward added.

The rise in heroin use and the deadly effects of the drug are well documented. 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 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.”

Due to the Senate Majority’s efforts, the recently enacted 2014-15 state budget included \$2.45 million for initiatives to provide prevention, treatment and addiction services to address the growing problems of heroin and opioid abuse. In addition to the creation of the task force, the senate passed legislation (S.6477B) in March to help save lives by allowing authorized health care professionals to increase public access to Narcan/Naloxone which, if timely administered, can prevent an overdose death.

The public forum will take place from 9:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. on Monday, April 28 at the Hunt Union Ballroom on the campus of SUNY-Oneonta.