



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Thomas F. O'Mara

O'Mara holds public round table discussion on regional, statewide heroin crisis (UPDATED--including a video replay of the full hearing)

THOMAS F. O'MARA May 14, 2014

| ISSUE: **CONTROLLED SUBSTANCES**



[Update, Friday, May 16th: Watch a video replay of today's full hearing [HERE](#)]

Elmira, N.Y., May 16,--State Senator Tom O'Mara (R,C-Big Flats) today brought the Senate Task Force on Heroin and Opioid Addiction to Elmira College for a public round table discussion on the growing heroin epidemic regionally and statewide.

The legislative hearing was held at Elmira College's Hamilton Hall. O'Mara was joined at today's hearing by the Task Force Vice Chairman, Senator Michael F. Nozzolio (R-Seneca Falls), and area Assemblymen Chris Friend (R-Big Flats) and Phil Palmesano (R,C,I-Corning).

O'Mara and his colleagues heard testimony from regional law enforcement officers and leaders, drug addiction counselors, treatment providers, educators, social services and mental health professionals, and other experts -- as well as recovering addicts and current patients -- about the range of complex challenges posed by heroin including addiction prevention and treatment options, drug-related crimes, and other community and public safety impacts.

"I appreciate everyone on the front lines locally who joined us to help us zero in on the heroin crisis. Their firsthand experience and their input is extremely valuable. We're going to keep working to determine the most effective combination of law enforcement, awareness and education, and treatment and prevention to try to stop the spread of heroin, better protect our communities and save lives," said O'Mara. The bipartisan Senate task force, on which O'Mara serves as a member, was created earlier this year at a time when local police departments, including many across the Southern Tier and Finger Lakes regions, were pointing to the alarming rise in the availability and use of heroin.

[read more in The Leader [HERE](#) and the *Star-Gazette* [HERE](#), and watch reports on the hearing on [WETM-TV](#) and [WENY-TV](#)]

According to figures from Cayuga Addiction Recovery Services, the numbers of 19-to-25 year olds in the Southern Tier and Finger Lakes treated for drug abuse increased more than 35 percent from 2007 to 2012.

The Senate task force has been holding public hearings since early April in every region of the state. A total of 17 hearings are scheduled.

O'Mara, who has been highlighting the proliferation of heroin and meth across the Southern Tier and Finger Lakes over the past few years, said that the Senate's task force is targeting the alarming rise in heroin use and addiction across New York and will develop legislative recommendations for combating, preventing and treating the drug's spread. They want to act on the legislation before the end of the current legislative session in late June.

A 2012 federal survey on drug use and health reported that the number of people who said they had used heroin in the past 12 months rose from 373,000 in 2007 to 669,000 people in 2012. The National Institutes of Health (NIH) has estimated that approximately 23 percent of those who use heroin become dependent on the highly addictive drug.