



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Thomas F. O'Mara

State begins 'Combat Heroin' campaign called for under new anti-heroin laws approved earlier this year

THOMAS F. O'MARA September 23, 2014

| ISSUE: **CONTROLLED SUBSTANCES**



Elmira, N.Y., September 23—A new state law co-sponsored by State Senator Tom O'Mara (R,C-Big Flats) earlier this year was set in motion yesterday with the announcement of a new “Combat Heroin” campaign to help educate and inform the public about the dangers of heroin and prescription opioid use.

The state’s new anti-heroin public awareness campaign was called for as part of a series of heroin- and opioid-related laws approved by the Legislature and the governor earlier this year in response to the growing heroin crisis across the Southern Tier and Finger Lakes regions, and statewide. The new initiatives, 11 in all, **were signed into law in late June** and

culminated a bipartisan legislative effort started in early April by the Senate Task Force on Heroin and Opioid Addiction, on which O'Mara serves as a member.

"We're hopeful that heightened public awareness, education and information will help keep more and more young people away from these devastating and deadly drugs," said O'Mara. "We're going to keep working together on this comprehensive effort to save lives, keep communities safer and prevent more heroin- and opioid-related tragedies regionally and across the state."

The new "Combat Heroin" awareness and education campaign, required under legislation O'Mara co-sponsored (S.7911, Chapter 40 of the Laws of 2014), includes a website (<http://www.combatheroin.ny.gov>) providing information about heroin and opioid abuse and addiction, access to treatment providers, and tips on how to recognize the warning signs of addiction. The new website will be complemented by a statewide media campaign, including public service announcements.

The effort is being administered jointly by the State Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services (OASAS) and the state Department of Health (DOH).

The Senate Task Force on Heroin and Opioid Addiction held nearly 20 public forums across the state in April and May, including one [O'Mara sponsored at Elmira College](#). Task force members solicited more than 50 hours of 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 -- 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.