



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Terrence Murphy

## **Murphy appointed as Co-Chair to lead Senate Joint Task Force on Heroin and Opioid Addiction**

Terrence P. Murphy

February 5, 2015

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ALBANY, NY - New York State Senate Majority Leader Dean G. Skelos today announced the appointment of three new Co-Chairs to lead the Senate's bipartisan Joint Task Force on Heroin and Opioid Addiction. Senators Terrence Murphy, George A. Amedore, Jr. and Robert Ortt will continue to examine the issues facing communities in the wake of increased heroin abuse. The Task Force will hold forums, meet with experts, and evaluate what state measures may be needed to further reduce drug abuse in New York.

Senate Majority Leader Dean Skelos said, "We need to continue the progress made by the Senate's Joint Heroin Task Force as we enter a new year with new members and committee chairs. More work needs to be done to help our communities

affected by opioid abuse and I am confident that Senators Murphy, Amedore, and Ortt will provide the leadership necessary to create new solutions that will save lives. They will build on the tremendous work conducted by former Task Force Chairman Senator Phil Boyle, and Vice-Chairs Senator Mike Nozzolio, and Senator David Carlucci, as well as all the members who participated in the Task Force last year."

"Winning the war on heroin and opioid abuse is a personal mission I have been on for nearly two years," Murphy said. "I am honored to now lead this fight on behalf of the Senate and remain determined to build strong partnerships with advocacy groups and law enforcement officials as we craft meaningful legislation to address issues like increasing penalties for drug dealers and ensuring adequate access to Narcan."

According to the State Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services, 1.8 million New Yorkers currently require assistance with chemical dependency - many due to opioid abuse, and nearly half of drug treatment admissions in the state result from an addiction to heroin or prescription opioids.

In 2014, the Senate created the bipartisan Joint Task Force on Heroin and Opioid Addiction, led by former Chairman of the Senate Committee on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse Phil Boyle (R-C-I, Suffolk County) and Vice-Chairs Senator Mike Nozzolio (R-C, Fayette), and Senator David Carlucci (D, Rockland). The Task Force held 18 forums throughout New York including in Cayuga, Chautauqua, Chemung, Clinton, Genesee, Jefferson, Monroe, Nassau, New York, Oneida, Orange, Otsego, Putnam, Rensselaer, Richmond, Rockland, Suffolk, and Sullivan counties. Task Force members traveled over 8,000 miles, spoke with more than 200 panelists, and listened to over 50 hours of testimony. Forum participants examined the issues surrounding the increase in drug abuse, addiction and drug related crimes, solicited input from experts and other stakeholders, and developed recommendations.

The Task Force issued a comprehensive report to prevent drug abuse and overdoses; increase the availability and efficacy of addiction treatment; and enhance the tools provided to law enforcement to keep heroin off the streets. The report included legislative recommendations that lead to the Senate's passage of 23 bills to address issues surrounding the increase in heroin and opioid abuse, addiction, and related crimes in New York.

This year, the Task Force will conduct its first forum on February 24 in Pawling, Dutchess County, and additional forums are being scheduled for communities across the state in coming months. During the forums, Senators will meet again with local elected officials as well as experts from the fields of law enforcement, addiction treatment, and education.