Senator Robert Ortt appointed co-chair of Joint Task Force on Heroin and Opioid Addiction

ROBERT G. ORTT   February 6, 2015

| ISSUE: CONTROLLED SUBSTANCES, DRUGS, PRESCRIBED DRUGS OR PRESCRIPTIONS

State Senator Robert Ortt (R,C,I-North Tonawanda) has been appointed as one of three legislators to lead the Senate's Joint Task Force on Heroin and Opioid Addiction. Senators Terrence Murphy (R,C,I,Green-Yorktown) and George Amedore, Jr. (R,C,I-Rotterdam) will also co-chair the task force.

Created in 2014, the Joint Task Force on Heroin and Opioid Addiction examines the rise in heroin use and other opioids in New York State and helps to develop ways to treat and prevent addiction.

"Heroin addiction is a growing problem in our communities," said Sen. Ortt, Chairman of the Senate Committee on Mental Health. "It's making its way into our schools, tearing families apart, and destroying lives. What was once a 'hard' but relatively-inaccessible drug has transitioned into a cheap, widely available drug that's made it exponentially more deadly. It's time to focus on more effective prevention and treatment programs in order to combat this epidemic, improve the lives of those affected, and take back our streets from dealers."

Those on the Task Force will hold forums, meet with experts, and evaluate state measures that may need to be taken to further reduce drug abuse in New York.

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.

As a result of the Task Force, last year the Senate passed 23 bills to address issues surrounding the increase in heroin and opioid abuse, addiction and related crimes throughout the state.

The first forum held by the Task Force will take place on Feb. 24 in Pawling, Dutchess County. Additional forums are being scheduled for communities across the state.