



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Thomas F. O'Mara

Senate approves O'Mara's legislation to increase meth-related criminal penalties

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Albany, N.Y., March 10—The State Senate yesterday approved, with strong bipartisan support, legislation sponsored by Senator Tom O'Mara (R-C, Big Flats) to significantly increase the criminal penalties for possessing and selling methamphetamine.

The Senate approved the legislation by a vote of 52 to 3.

O'Mara has consistently highlighted the dramatic rise in meth-related arrests and other incidents across the region over the past few years. Domestic meth availability is at a five-year high and is likely the result of increasing large-scale production in Mexico and small-scale production in the United States. While meth has been traditionally associated with western and southern regions of the country, its influence, sale and possession are moving steadily towards the East Coast. By implementing stricter anti-meth laws, the measure would align New York with similar measures in the neighboring states of Pennsylvania, Ohio and Massachusetts.

"We need to heed the warnings over meth and ensure that our laws are keeping pace with the goal of putting meth manufacturers and sellers out of business in New York State. We've seen a troubling increase across the Southern Tier and Finger Lakes regions over the past few years in the production, sale and use of meth," said O'Mara. "Law enforcement officers throughout our communities continue to do outstanding work on public awareness, education and protection. It's going to continue to take a broad-based, consistent effort, including treatment, to keep a lid on this drug's spread. I'm hopeful that these tougher new laws will help in the punishment of meth crimes. We also hope tougher anti-meth laws will act as a stronger deterrent among our young people at risk of falling prey to this cycle of addiction and tragedy."

The legislation approved by the Senate (S.1150/A.5577) would increase the criminal penalties for the possession and/or sale of methamphetamine by implementing an increasingly severe set of felony offenses. If enacted, state penalties in response to meth would be brought more in line with the penalties for possessing and selling cocaine and heroin. O'Mara's legislation is sponsored in the Assembly by Assemblyman Sean Ryan (D-Erie County) and is currently in the Assembly Codes Committee

[\[Read more in today's Corning Leader \(and attached below\)\]](#)

[O'Mara is also sponsoring legislation \(S.1440/A.5617\) targeting the operation of clandestine meth labs](#) by increasing the criminal penalties for the possession of meth manufacturing material and the unlawful manufacture of meth, also through a series of increasingly severe felony offenses. Ryan is also sponsoring this measure in the Assembly. It remains in committee in both houses of the Legislature.

According to a 2009 report from the Rand Corporation, the economic cost of meth use – including its impact on local systems of criminal justice, health care and social services -- in the United States reached nearly \$24 billion in 2005 and could go as high as \$48 billion.

O'Mara said that the Legislature and then-Governor George Pataki enacted New York's first comprehensive anti-meth law in 2005 following the release of a State Commission on Investigation (SIC) report warning that methamphetamine would become an increasingly dire public health and safety threat unless New York adopted new and tougher laws to combat the drug's proliferation. The 2005 report, "Methamphetamine Use & Manufacture," cautioned that the drug's rapidly growing use and manufacture posed "an urgent threat to public health and safety and without new and tougher laws to combat the threat, New York could become a haven for methamphetamine users and manufacturers." It identified the Southern Tier as a hotbed of criminal meth activity.