



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

David J. Valesky

Legislation Passed that Addresses Elder Abuse, Substance Abuse, and Land Banks

David J. Valesky

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To celebrate Juneteenth, I joined Syracuse Mayor Stephanie Miner, Congressman Dan Maffei, Syracuse City Common Councilors, and area residents for a flag raising at City Hall on Friday, June 13.

This past week, the Senate passed a number of bills that I sponsored or co-sponsored that address elder financial abuse, substance abuse, land banks, and housing.

I released a [report on May 6](#) that shows financial abuse amongst New York's seniors to be more prevalent than initially thought, with much higher rates of undocumented incidents that actually exist. In order to combat this problem and to protect even more elderly individuals from becoming future victims themselves, I sponsored legislation that will, among other things: authorize banks to refuse suspicious transactions, expand the definition of "caregiver;" and allow a prosecutor to obtain medical records under certain circumstances.

Financial elder abuse manifests itself in many ways. Often, the perpetrators are family members of or have a close relationship with the victim, who may depend on them for care. [World Elder Abuse Awareness Day is June 15](#). If you suspect someone you know may be a victim of abuse, you should contact the authorities, or call Vera House's 24-hour crisis hotline at 315-468-3260.

A package of bills that I co-sponsored [target heroin and opioid abuse prevention and treatment](#) and expand resources for law enforcement. I have heard firsthand stories of the damage caused here in Central New York by the heroin and opioid epidemic sweeping the state, and this comprehensive legislative package addresses such concerns. In addition, I sponsored legislation that will help law enforcement officials combat the threat to public health and safety surrounding [methamphetamine production](#), which is particularly pervasive in rural counties in Upstate New York. The bill makes it difficult for would-be producers to find the ingredients needed to make meth, and therefore will decrease production of the drug itself.

The Senate also passed legislation I sponsored to increase the maximum number of [land banks](#) in the state to 20. Land banks, entities that take control of problem properties and then redevelop or dispose of them in a manner consistent with the public's interest, are a proven strategic tool for cities and counties where the number of vacant properties outpaces the private market's ability to deal with them. I have seen here in Central New York the positive effects a land bank can have in

getting dilapidated and abandoned properties turned around and back on the tax rolls.

I also sponsored legislation that specifically directs funding to Upstate New York from the [supportive housing development program](#). Supportive housing models include inclusive design for those who may have physical impairments and often offer a variety of services including activities, transportation, an on-site service coordinator, amenities, meals, and support for residents' health-related services. Supportive housing is an excellent option for seniors and other vulnerable populations to live on their own while receiving the services and assistance they need. It is critical that a portion of available funds be allocated to Upstate projects to ensure our citizens have the same access to supportive housing as those in the rest of the state.

More information about the specific bills can be found on [my website](#).

State Court Officer Applications Being Accepted

The New York State Unified Court System is accepting applications for state court officers. These officers are trained in law enforcement and are responsible for the protection and security of judges, court employees, and the public in courthouses throughout the state. Apply online to take the exam; the filing period opens June 19 and ends August 14. More information is available [online](#).

Cornell Offers Maple Camp

The Cornell Maple Camp is an in-depth course for people who want to become maple syrup producers, or current producers with some experience who would like to expand their knowledge and improve their practices. The camp will run from August 13-16, 2014 at Cornell's Arnot Forest. Visit the [Cornell Maple Camp website](#) for more information and to register.