



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Fred Akshar

Senator Fred Akshar: There's a Time to Listen, Learn and a Time to Act. Now is the Time to Act.

FRED AKSHAR May 22, 2016

| ISSUE: **HEROIN AND OPIOID ADDICTION, HEROIN**



This new job as a freshman state senator is nothing like my old job.

Albany is a completely different beast from the Broome County Sheriff's Office. It's big, packed with personalities, many voices, substantial bureaucracy and slow progress. I've learned that if I'm going to get things done for us, I need partners from other regions of the state and across party lines to forge compromises on a single issue at a time. Nothing like my

old job.

There are two things that have stayed the same: who I am - Fred, and what I need to do - fight the plague of heroin. Heroin's reach is just as real to me in the halls of the Capitol as it was on the streets of Broome County.

As a sheriff's deputy, you see first hand how addiction has ripped families apart. As a member of the Senate's Heroin Task Force, you not only meet other scarred families, but health professionals, law enforcement officers, addiction specialists and survivors from across the state all working together toward a single goal.

We've been fighting this scourge as a community and a state for years. No one solution is going to save all our loved ones and repair all our families, but we're making gains, and I believe we're going to win.

This week the Task Force made gains. We took what we learned from many public hearings and roundtable discussions and we put forth over 40 legislative, policy and budgetary recommendations that need action. You can view these proposals and recommendations and read the full report at Akshar.NYSenate.Gov.

We identified four focus areas: Prevention, Treatment, Recovery and Enforcement. The same day we passed over a dozen measures to address issues like enhancing access to treatment, getting prescribers more involved in preventing addiction and tightening laws on those that perpetuate this plague for personal gain.

I know that any action we take will not have come soon enough for many families, but this epidemic didn't arrive at our doorstep overnight, and it won't be eliminated overnight either.

The next step for many of these bills is for the Assembly to pass them and the Governor to sign them. As I mentioned earlier, things in Albany don't move fast, and to truly make a difference, we need partners.

Locally, you're seeing those partnerships grow. The state, local municipalities and community organizations are working together. Whether it's delivering grant money to close gaps in treatment, expanding their workload or adjusting their policies to address those in need of help, it takes everyone on the same page working toward the same goal. We need that same spirit in Albany.

Heroin knows no political party, no social or economic status, no race or creed. That's the approach we have to take in fighting it. On a community level, we need healthcare professionals, treatment specialists, law enforcement, families and educators all working together. In Albany, we need Republicans, Democrats, Independent Democrats, Majority and Minority conferences all putting their differences aside and working to pass these initiatives. We need to make sure the additional funding in the State Budget for local addiction services gets allocated quickly and gets put to use as soon as possible. We can win this battle and make a difference for families across our state.

At my old job, we were only able to make a difference for one family or one neighborhood in Broome County at a time. This is nothing like my old job.