



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Michael H. Ranzenhofer

New Funding, Legislation to Help Overcome Heroin & Opioid Crisis

SENATOR MICHAEL RANZENHOFER June 15, 2016

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Senator Mike Ranzenhofer's
Monthly Column

...In your local newspaper
the third week of every month

Senator Ranzenhofer's column appeared in the Amherst and Clarence Bees on June 15th

Communities all across Western New York are now fighting one of the most challenging public health crises in generations with the rise in heroin and opioid abuse. The impact of this crisis has been devastating. It has been felt in every corner of our community, leaving too many individuals and families heartbroken.

According to a recent report by the State Comptroller, overdose deaths related to heroin and opioid abuse increased faster in New York than any other state, and Erie County has one of

the highest opioid overdose death rates in the entire state.

Earlier this year, I helped to secure \$166 million in funding, as part of the State Budget, to strengthen prevention, treatment, recovery and education services. This new funding will provide powerful tools to help health care professionals, mental health experts and law enforcement.

More recently, I hosted a special community forum as a member of the Joint Senate Task Force on Heroin and Opioid Addiction at Williamsville South High School. I led a two-hour discussion about addressing this problem with educators, addiction specialists, health care professionals, law enforcement and residents. The Task Force has released a report summarizing findings resulting from forums all across the state.

The State Senate has also passed 22 bills aimed at stemming the growth of the heroin and opioid crisis, while supporting those battling their addiction on the journey to recovery. Specifically, two of these bills focus on prevention by deterring the abuse of prescription drugs and increasing awareness.

Senate bill S6091B would limit initial prescriptions of controlled substances to treat acute pain to a five-day supply, keeping excess pills off the street. Another bill, S4348A, would create a continuing medical education program for practitioners to review appropriate prescribing, pain management, and addiction screening and treatment.

Other bills approved by the State Senate create more tools for law enforcement to disrupt the supply of heroin and stop the diversion of prescription medications within the state.

Senate bills S100 and S4177 would aid in convicting drug dealers and expanding crimes for major traffickers.

Lastly, I have introduced new legislation to require prescription bottles of controlled substances to contain stronger warning labels. The bill requires a new warning for opioid drugs: "Warning. This drug is highly addictive. Please consult your pharmacist or physician before using."

If enacted, this stronger precaution would better educate the public of the inherent risks involved in using prescription opioids and facilitate a conversation between a patient and their pharmacist or doctor.

Each one of these initiatives is a first step to solving this serious issue. All of us share the common goal of overcoming this crisis, and we have to work together to find solutions. As your State Senator, I will continue to work to end this public health crisis.