



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Thomas F. O'Mara

## Senate approves 'Drug Take Back Act' sponsored by O'Mara and Hannon: New measure holds drug manufacturers responsible for the proper disposal and collection of their products

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| ISSUE: **PRESCRIPTION DRUGS**



This proposal to greatly expand the number of permanent, locally based drop-off locations would be a very positive, cost-effective addition to the state's ongoing, overall strategy to protect our communities and local environments.

**Albany, N.Y., April 25**—The State Senate today approved legislation sponsored by Senator Tom O'Mara (R,C,I-Big Flats), Chair of the Senate Environmental Conservation Committee,

and Senator Kemp Hannon (R-Nassau), Chair of the Senate Health Committee, to further combat the abuse of prescription drugs and prevent unused drugs from contaminating water supplies.

The O'Mara-Hannon "Drug Take Back Act" (**S7354**) calls for the establishment of an industry-funded, statewide pharmaceutical drug take-back program. It advances a "product stewardship" approach to the challenge of disposing of unwanted medications.

Pharmaceutical manufacturers would be responsible for all of the costs of the initiative including public education and awareness, as well as the collection, transport, and destruction of unwanted drugs. The Act further requires chain pharmacies and mail-order pharmacies to provide consumers with on-site collection, prepaid mail-back envelopes, or other federally approved methods to encourage safe drug disposal.

O'Mara said, "It's incredibly important to do anything and everything we can to complement and support the efforts of local law enforcement and other community leaders to combat prescription drug abuse. These efforts include **National Prescription Drug Take-Back Days like the one coming up on April 28** and other initiatives like this one to facilitate the collection, and safe and responsible disposal of unused medications. This proposal to greatly expand the number of permanent, locally based drop-off locations would be a very positive, cost-effective addition to the state's ongoing, overall strategy to protect our communities and local environments."

Hannon said, "New York has an opioid epidemic demanding attention now. Communities, law enforcement, elected officials and pharmacies holding special take-back days is just not enough. More aggressive efforts to curb the tide of opioid addiction are essential. Providing New Yorkers with safe and accessible disposal methods will help prevent addiction, which often starts with misuse of unused medications. This legislation not only helps address the opioid epidemic, it makes sure all medications are properly disposed of and do not

contaminate our water supplies.”

The Senate also approved legislation (**S6673**) today directing the state departments of health and environmental conservation to establish a statewide web listing of drug disposal sites, events and other disposal options for consumers. The site would be searchable by zip code so New Yorkers can find a site closest to them when they need to get rid of prescriptions or other drugs in their homes.

The lawmakers noted that while law enforcement agencies have drop-off points and collection boxes – and other government agencies conduct drug take-back days to help properly and safely dispose of many drugs -- more must be done. Other state-level initiatives to expand the number of permanent collection sites in communities are conducted on a voluntary basis, are limited in scope, and participation remains low. They added that “product stewardship” is the concept that the manufacturers, producers, or sellers of a product should take responsibility for minimizing the product's environmental impact throughout all stages of its life cycle, including disposal, recycling, or destruction. O’Mara sponsors a similar “Paint Stewardship Act” to facilitate the recycling of unused paint, for example.

The Drug Take Back Act would create a unified, statewide drug take-back program that would save government and taxpayer dollars, and reduce medication misuse. Additionally, the program would protect New York State’s waterways by preventing drugs from being improperly disposed of by flushing or other means that contaminate water bodies and negatively affect aquatic life. Last year, New York made a historic investment in improving and protecting state waterways. Keeping drugs out of water supplies is another important and necessary step.

The legislation now goes to the Assembly.