



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

## Keeping Unwanted and Expired Drugs Out of the Wrong Hands

SENATOR PATTY RITCHIE July 13, 2018

| ISSUE: **DRUG TAKE BACK, DRUG ABUSE**



### Senator Ritchie's Weekly Column

Long before I became a State Senator, I was aware of the growing substance abuse problems in our region. In the years since, we have seen illegal drugs not only become a crisis in our communities, but they have greatly affected our families, friends and neighbors.

Most of the focus of this drug problem has been on opioids and heroin, and rightly so. These drugs are not only ruining lives, they are taking lives. Heroin and opioid abuse is an issue I will continue to prioritize, as just this year I helped advocate for a record \$247 million

investment to fight back.

However, the presence of drugs in our region are not limited to these two killers. Legal prescription drugs, ending up in the wrong hands is having a similar impact on families.

That is why after becoming a State Senator, I looked into hosting drug take back events I would eventually call “Shed the Meds”. I have hosted them for several years now, throughout our region.

This spring alone, I teamed up with local hospitals, community groups and law enforcement agencies to collect nearly 400 pounds of unwanted or expired medications. That is 400 pounds of medications that will not end up in the hands of people they were never intended for. Throughout the years, I have also collected hundreds of pounds of these prescription drugs at my local Senior Health and Wellness Fairs. We have collected and properly disposed of well over 1,000 pounds throughout the years.

In addition to keeping these drugs out of the wrong hands, their proper disposal also protects our drinking water and the environment from when they end up flushed down a toilet.

It is these efforts and their results that make me so happy to see New York State officially pass a drug take back law. Under the new Drug Take Back Act, not only are we expanding the number of permanent, local prescription drug drop-off locations across the state, we are saving taxpayers money at the same time.

This law requires drug makers to pay for the cost of the take back program, which includes the collection and disposal of the drugs and ensuring pharmacies have drop boxes and pre-paid envelopes for legal consumers.

Over the years, it has been amazing to see so many people understand the importance of the proper disposal of their prescription drugs and now that New York State is on board, I feel we are on the right track to putting a major dent in our battles to end our drug problem and protect our environment.

I am now eager to see just how much this new law will aid in New York State's effort to curb drug abuse. I also hope you will consider taking part in this very important program.