



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Terrence Murphy

Senator Murphy Cheers Signing of New York's Drug Take Back Act

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Albany, NY - Everyone knows someone who has been affected by the opioid epidemic, whether it's a friend, co-worker, or that friendly stranger you pass on the street who always says hello. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, drug overdoses killed 63,632 Americans in 2016. Nearly two-thirds of these deaths, roughly 66%, involved a prescription or illicit opioid.

In response, New York's legislature passed the "Drug Take Back Act" which has now been signed into law. The measure establishes a unified statewide drug take-back program that will reduce medication misuse, and save government and taxpayer money. Senator Terrence Murphy, who voted for its passage, steadfastly supported the bill, S9100, authored by Senators Kemp Hannon and Tom O'Mara. The measure will also protect the state's water supplies by preventing drugs from being improperly disposed of by flushing or other means that result in contamination of water bodies and negatively impact aquatic life.

"Unwanted medicines left in the home endangers our children, seniors, and pets. Flushing drugs sends them directly into our waters, harming the environment. Drugs thrown in the garbage then become available for dealers to sell and further infect our communities," said Senator Murphy. "My program, 'Shed the Meds,' has been a valuable tool in the war against opioid addiction and has taken a large portion of drugs out of circulation. This legislation will provide for unified, statewide drug take back, financed by manufacturers, and not the public, that will provide convenient methods for drop-off and collection."

Senator Hannon, Chair of the Senate's Health Committee, said, "I'm pleased this important measure, which was originally included in the Senate one-house budget this year, has finally been signed into law. This legislation will take drugs out of the medicine cabinets and will prevent drugs from polluting New York's waters."

"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," stated Senator O'Mara, Chair of the Senate's Environmental Conservation Committee. "These efforts include National Prescription Drug Take-Back Days and other initiatives like this one to facilitate the collection, and safe and responsible disposal of unused medications. This new law will greatly expand the number of permanent, locally based drop-off locations. It will be a very positive, cost-effective addition to the state's ongoing, overall strategy to protect our communities and local environments."

The Drug Take Back Act will help give manufacturers of pharmaceutical products responsibility for costs of the take-back program, with focal points being public education and awareness, as well as drug collection, transport, and destruction. Under this new law, chain and mail order pharmacies will be required to provide consumers with collection options, including drop boxes and prepaid mail-back envelopes. The measure will also ensure rural, urban, and other underserved communities have access to ongoing collection services so that all persons have reasonable access to locations to dispose of their drugs and prevent over-saturation in higher populated areas.

The new law is critical to the state's ongoing efforts to reduce drug abuse because one of the most common ways for opioid addictions to start is when individuals have access to leftover prescriptions, whether it be theirs, a friend's, a relative's, or someone else's. By increasing New Yorkers' opportunities to properly dispose of unused drugs, the potential for abuse and addiction is decreased. In addition, proper disposal helps protect the state's water supplies because fewer people would improperly dispose of drugs by flushing them down a toilet or using other means that result in water contamination. Last year, the Senate led the way in securing a historic \$2.5 billion investment to improve and protect water resources, and keeping drugs out of water supplies is another important and necessary step.

Senator Murphy has operated a highly successful "Shed the Meds" program since taking office in 2014. The prescription drop-off program, conducted in conjunction with local police departments and drug treatment organizations at various locations throughout the 40th Senate District, takes more than 1,000 pounds of prescription drugs out of circulation each year. "Shed the Meds" and other community-based take-back programs served as the impetus for the Drug Take Back Act legislation.