



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

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Senator Flanagan: Arizona Shooter Shows Need To Ban Salvia In New York State

JOHN J. FLANAGAN January 21, 2011

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Senator John Flanagan (2nd Senate District) is again calling for the Assembly to join him in his effort to impose a statewide ban on the sale of salvia divinorum, which is widely claimed to have the same effects of LSD (lysergic acid diethylamide), throughout New York State. His renewed call to ban the legally available hallucinogen follows the news that Jared Loughner, the alleged shooter in Arizona earlier this month, had been a regular user of the hallucinogenic substance.

Salvia divinorum, also known as Diviner's Sage, Sister Salvia, Ska Maria Pastora or simply salvia, is a psychoactive plant from the mint family and is currently available on the Internet and in stores without age restrictions. While Senator Flanagan has been active in his efforts to ban salvia for years and had just last month renewed his call for the ban after popstar and Disney Channel favorite Miley Cyrus was shown on a YouTube video smoking the substance from a bong, the news of Loughner's use clearly highlights the need to act to protect New York State residents.

In recent news accounts, it has been stated that Loughner started using the substance while in high school and that much of the behavior in his Internet rantings were typical of those who have experimented with salvia.

“While the various media outlets have not yet stated that the shooter’s salvia use provoked his heinous actions, our state should use this as a warning and ban this substance as soon as possible. If his unstable public outbursts are typical of salvia users, how can our state not take action and keep this substance from our youth? How can we continue to separate the use of salvia from illegal drugs if they have similar effects? It is time to pass a ban on salvia,” stated Senator Flanagan.

According to the available news reports, salvia divinorum is chewed or smoked to induce illusions and hallucinations, the diversity of which is described by users as similar to those induced by ketamine, mescaline, or psilocybin. It is currently under review by the medical and scientific community to determine if it should be a controlled substance.

While the long-term effects of salvia are still being considered, the National Drug Intelligence Center has indicated that they may be similar to those produced by other hallucinogens such as LSD (lysergic acid diethylamide) including depression and schizophrenia.

Some abusers also indicate that long-term abuse can cause hallucinogen persisting perception disorder, or "flashbacks." Numerous individuals report experiencing negative effects during their first experience with Salvia divinorum and indicate that they would not use it a second time. Some others report that the drug caused them to become introverted and sometimes unable to communicate clearly.

Senator Flanagan’s legislation, which would go into effect sixty days after becoming law, would subject violators to a \$500 civil penalty per violation.

“The need to ban the sale of this potent and dangerous substance has never been clearer than today and I am looking for the Assembly to join with us to make it a reality this year.

This is clearly a gateway drug and one that has no place on the streets of our communities. This is a substance that we need to get off the shelves,” added Senator Flanagan.

In addition, Senator Flanagan has again called for the state to ban the sale of synthetic marijuana products that are being smoked by teenagers as an alternative to marijuana. The fake drug is legally available under a variety of names like K2, Spike 99 and Spice at stores throughout New York State.

This synthetic is composed of a mix of herbs and spices that are laced with a powerful psychotropic drug or synthetic cannabinoids (pot-like chemicals) that mimic the effect of getting high on marijuana.

Dangerous side-effects have been reported by those using the synthetic marijuana including hallucinations, vomiting, agitation, increased heart rate, elevated blood pressure and other adverse conditions. The United States Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) has listed the chemicals on its list of Drugs and Chemicals of Concern. The chemicals that would be banned under Senator Flanagan’s legislation have never been tested for safety in humans as they were created for experimental use in animals and cell cultures.

Senator Flanagan reintroduced both pieces of legislation earlier this year in the New York State Senate and is confident of the passage of both measures in the Republican-led Senate Chamber.