



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Dean G. Skelos

## Senate Passes Bill to Ban Salvia Divinorum

DEAN G. SKELOS January 24, 2012

In an effort to keep drugs out of the hands of New York State's youth, the New York State Senate today passed legislation, sponsored by Senator John Flanagan (R-C-I, East Northport), to ban the sale of the legal hallucinogen salvia divinorum.

"Salvia divinorum is a substance that can act as a gateway to further drug use and this legislation will help keep children in our state from starting down that destructive path," said Senator Flanagan. "Too many families in our communities have been affected by the ongoing fight against drugs. Parents need to know that New York State is taking steps to help win that important fight. The simple reality is that we need to ban the sale of salvia divinorum this year and I look forward to working with Assemblyman Ortiz to finally make that happen."

"This substance poses a real danger to young people who use it," Senate Majority Leader Dean G. Skelos said. "I applaud Senator Flanagan for taking the lead in addressing this problem and I hope the Assembly will join us in passing this bill so it can be enacted into law this year."

Senator Flanagan has led the effort to ban the herb following incidents that have been reported in the news throughout the past several years. In one incident last year, Ryan Santanna, a 21-year old Roosevelt Island resident, had allegedly been smoking salvia divinorum before apparently leaping to his death in Roosevelt Island. This is the same legal substance that pop star Miley Cyrus was allegedly smoking in a widely distributed video clip in 2010.

"Addiction has become one of Long Island's - and one of New York State's - most pressing public health problems," stated Dr. Jeffrey Reynolds, Executive Director of the Long Island Council on Alcoholism & Drug Dependence. "We thank Senator Flanagan for once again introducing this measure and working with his colleagues to ensure its passage. We hope the NYS Assembly will follow suit because increasing numbers of young people are using salvia, suffering significant health consequences and in many cases, going on to use other drugs including prescription medication and heroin. A ban on salvia sales will save both health care dollars and the lives of young people in our community."

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.

According to the Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA), 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 are still being studied, the National Drug Intelligence Center has indicated that they may be similar to those produced by other hallucinogens such as LSD, 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 (S.1833A), which would go into effect 60 days after becoming law, would subject violators to a civil penalty of up to \$500 per violation.