



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

James L. Seward

Senate Targets Illegal Prescription Drug Abuse

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ALBANY, 02/13/12 – With the abuse of illegally-obtained prescription narcotics growing rapidly, the New York State Senate today passed several bills to curb the black market in prescription painkillers.

Senate approval of the bills followed a roundtable discussion on the issue of abuse of prescription painkillers. This was a second in a series of public meetings discussing legislation to combat prescription drug abuse and to examine improving New York's prescription reporting system.

“Abuse of controlled prescription drugs has reached epidemic proportions,” said Senator Seward. **“Lives are being lost to overdoses and serious crimes are being committed to obtain these drugs. These abuses take their toll – in lives and public health costs. It is time to update our laws to prevent further tragedies and to punish those who profit on the pain of others.”**

Legislation passed by the Senate would do the following:

- Place greater controls on Hydrocodone and Tramadol, highly addictive prescription pain medications (S.5880A);
- Increases criminal penalties for physicians and pharmacists who illegally divert prescription drugs, which, in effect, punishes bad actors, protects consumers from compromised medications, and safeguards resources for the Medicaid program (S.5260C);
- Criminalize the illegal sale of a controlled substance by a practitioner or pharmacist to address practitioners operating “pill mills,” which fuel the black market for controlled substance medication (S.6066);
- Criminalize the first-degree illegal sale of a controlled substance to a minor under the age of 14, making it a class A-II felony (S.3210B);
- Require the Office of the Medicaid Inspector General (OMIG) to post all administrative law decisions on their website within 30 days of decision to increase the efficiency and transparency of decisions concerning Medicaid fraud and abuse (S.6271).

The Senate also passed a resolution, in conjunction with the national day that would designate April 28, 2012 as “Prescription Drug Take-Back Day” in New York State. The day was originally designated in 2008 by the United States Department of Justice’s Drug

Enforcement Administration (DEA) in an attempt to have people turn in unwanted, unused, and expired prescription drugs in a safe, convenient way.

Last year, more than 377,000 pounds – equal to 188 tons - of unwanted or expired drugs were returned at the more than 5,300 participating sites across all 50 states on that one day.

The bills were sent to the Assembly.