



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Jack M. Martins

## Senate Passes 'I-STOP' Legislation to Combat Prescription Drug Abuse

JACK M. MARTINS June 11, 2012

| ISSUE: **DRUGS**



### THE LANDMARK **I-STOP LAW**

Saving Lives by Preventing  
Prescription Drug Abuse

In response to the escalating problem of prescription drug abuse, the state Senate passed legislation that would make significant changes to the way prescription drugs are distributed and monitored in New York State.

The bill (S7637), sponsored by Senator Andrew Lanza (R-I, Staten Island) and Senator Kemp Hannon (R, Nassau), Chairman of the Senate Health Committee, and co-sponsored by

Senator Jack M. Martins, Chairman of the Senate Local Government Committee, includes “real time” prescription tracking to provide more information to doctors and pharmacists, in an effort to prevent deaths from abuse and overdoses of prescription drugs, particularly painkillers.

“Prescription drug abuse is an epidemic that will take the entire community to combat. This legislation will keep dangerous prescription drugs out of the wrong hands. Together, with public awareness, the many organizations dedicated to combating the problem and a total community effort, we can save lives,” said Senator Martins. “No one should lose a family member to prescription drug abuse. But this is one step. We must remain committed to combating this problem and shutting the door on the abuse of prescription drugs. This legislation is a significant step.”

“Passage of this bill today puts us one step closer to reversing the numbers of deaths caused by the prescription drug abuse epidemic, which has destroyed families and lives from one end of the state to the other,” Senator Lanza said. “This law will allow doctors and pharmacists to have the information they need to ensure that dangerous prescription drugs are kept out of the wrong hands. I thank Governor Cuomo, Attorney General Schneiderman, Senator Skelos, Speaker Silver, Senator Hannon and Assemblyman Cusick for working so long and so hard on this cooperative effort.”

“In the last year, more than 22 million prescriptions for painkillers were written in a state with less than 20 million people,” said Senator Hannon. “Sadly, more Americans die every year from prescription drug overdoses than heroin and cocaine combined. This legislation will tackle the fastest-growing drug problem in New York, and by providing real-time reporting, we'll be able to save lives and make a real dent in addiction.”

The provisions of the legislation include:

- Creating a modernized and improved “real time” Prescription Monitoring Program (I-STOP) that practitioners and pharmacists can securely and easily access, allowing them to view their patients' controlled substance histories;
- Requiring e-prescribing, making New York a national leader by being one of the first states to move from paper prescriptions to a system mandating electronic prescribing;
- Updating controlled substance schedules to align New York’s Controlled Substances Act with Federal Law and changing the schedules for hydrocodone compounds and tramadol to reduce abuse;
- Enhancing the Prescription Pain Medication Awareness Program to educate the public and health care practitioners about the risks associated with prescribing and taking controlled substance pain medications; and
- Establishing a Safe Disposal Program to increase the options available to safely dispose of unused controlled substances and prevent people who abuse prescription painkillers from obtaining them from friends or relatives.

The abuse of prescription medicine has become the nation's fastest-growing drug problem according to the Office of National Drug Control Policy. According to the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), nearly 15,000 people die every year of overdoses due to prescription painkillers. In 2010, 1 in 20 people in the United States over the age of 11 reported using prescription painkillers for nonmedical reasons in the past year.

The abuse of prescription drugs is a statewide problem. Nearly one year ago on June 19, 2011, David Laffer shot four and killed four people at a drug store in Medford, Suffolk County, as he stole 11,000 prescription hydrocodone pills. Michael D. Israel, 20, of North Buffalo, killed himself on June 4, 2011 via a self-inflicted gunshot wound because of his addiction to

prescription drugs. And last week, 100 people were arrested in a coordinated law enforcement sweep targeting illegal prescription drug use in New York City and Long Island.

The bill was sent to the Assembly.