



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Lee M. Zeldin

Senate Passes Legislation to Reduce Prescription Drug Abuse

LEE M. ZELDIN June 12, 2012



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 today 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, 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.

“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.”

“As we watch prescription drug abuse become one of the fastest growing drug problems, I am pleased that New York State is enacting systematic reforms that will modernize the way prescription drugs are distributed and tracked,” stated bill co-sponsor Senator Mark Grisanti (R, North Buffalo). “Working in a bipartisan manner, Albany has reached consensus on the creation of a real time prescription monitoring registry which allows doctors and pharmacists access to instant vital information to stop abuse, illegal transfer of scripts and theft. I stand here today committed to work with my colleagues to pass this landmark comprehensive prescription drug reform package.”

“The abuse of prescription drugs is destroying lives and ripping apart families and with this bill we are taking a dramatic step to stop this abuse,” Senate Majority Leader Dean G. Skelos said. “I applaud Senators Lanza, Hannon and Grisanti for recognizing this problem and working with Governor Cuomo, the Attorney General, and the Assembly to develop legislation that takes a comprehensive approach that will save lives.”

“Since, February of this year, I’ve lost five kids ages 17 to 21 years of age in my district due to prescription drug overdoses,” Senator Marty Golden (R-C, Brooklyn) said. “The impact on the communities and schools and families is overwhelming. I’m proud of this bill and it will address a very serious problem. This is a truly a great step forward.”

“This epidemic has reached our communities, our schools, and our homes – it is a public health crisis that has resulted in tragic criminal cases. The time to fight this problem is now,” said Senator Steve Saland (R-I-C, Poughkeepsie).

“The issue of prescription drug addiction and abuse has grown rapidly over the last few years, especially here in Western New York,” said Senator George D. Maziarz (R-C, Newfane).

“This legislation takes a multi-faceted approach to addressing this important issue, and most importantly can help save the lives of thousands of people right here in our community.

While we pause to remember those who have battled their addictions and lost, we now know that we are taking a pro-active approach to fixing this problem. I applaud the Legislature, Governor and Attorney General for working together to pass this necessary bipartisan legislation.”

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.