



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

William Larkin

## Senate Passes "I-Stop" to Reduce Prescription Drug Abuse

WILLIAM J. LARKIN JR. June 14, 2012

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In response to the escalating problem of prescription drug abuse, the state Senate and Assembly have 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.

"This legislation will save lives," said Senator Bill Larkin (R-C, Cornwall-on-Hudson). "The growing epidemic of prescription drug abuse has escalated beyond anyone's expectations and drastic measures are needed to prevent further deaths. I am very pleased that the Senate and the Assembly were able to work with Governor Andrew Cuomo to reach an agreement that will prevent further abuses and educate people on the dangers of prescription pain medications," said Larkin.

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.