



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

## Ritchie Praises Governor Cuomo's Crackdown on Synthetic Drugs

PATTY RITCHIE August 7, 2012

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### State Makes it Illegal to Sell, Possess Bath Salts and Other Substances

State Senator Patty Ritchie is praising Governor Cuomo and the New York State Department of Health's issuing of new regulations to crackdown on the synthetic drug epidemic that is sweeping New York State and the rest of the nation.

The new regulations, issued today by the Department of Health and approved by the Public Health and Planning Council, will expand the existing list of prohibited drugs and chemicals to include dozens more substances that are used to make synthetic drugs like bath salts and synthetic marijuana. The addition of these prohibited substances is aimed at making it more difficult for manufacturers to simply modify the chemicals used to make the drugs.

"Synthetic drugs like bath salts and synthetic marijuana are creating very serious, deadly problems across the nation, and right here in the North Country and Central New York," said Senator Ritchie.

"I'm pleased that Governor Cuomo and the State Department of Health are recognizing how important it is that we take steps to put an end to the use of these dangerous substances and that law enforcement officials are being given the necessary tools to fight back against this growing epidemic."

Senator Ritchie has been a strong advocate in the fight against synthetic drugs. Last month, nearly 5,000 people joined the Senator and Anita Seefried-Brown, a certified drug counselor from the Jefferson County Alcohol and Substance Abuse Council, as well as Jefferson County District Attorney Cindy Intschert and Oswego County Undersheriff Eugene Sullivan for a live telephone town hall on the danger of bath salts.

The Senator is also a sponsor of several bills that aim to crackdown on bath salts and synthetic marijuana, to keep them out of reach of children, including one bill sponsored with Assemblyman Will Barclay.

Under the new regulations, for the first time, the owner of an establishment and/or an employee selling the synthetic drugs will be charged with possession of an illicit substance if found guilty. The new order also

increases criminal penalties; as violators will now face fines of up to \$500 and potentially up to 15 days in jail.

Although the sale and use of many of these substances is prohibited by the federal government, the new regulations announced today give local law enforcement officials, for the first time, the authority to pursue violators under state law and refer those violators to local District Attorneys for prosecution.

In addition to the new regulations, Governor Cuomo has also announced a toll-free hotline, 1-888-99SALTS, which people can use to report usage and sale of bath salts or other synthetic drugs.

The problem of synthetic drugs has become so serious that the Army launched a major crackdown on abusers, and it recently drew the attention of the state Attorney General, who sued 16 businesses, including stores in our region, to get the products off the shelves.