



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Thomas F. O'Mara

O'Mara legislation targets manufacturing, possession and sale of methamphetamine

THOMAS F. O'MARA April 11, 2013

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Elmira, N.Y., April 11 —State Senator Tom O'Mara (R-C, Big Flats), highlighting the increasing frequency of methamphetamine-related arrests and other incidents across the region over the past few years, announced today that he has introduced legislation in the Senate to significantly increase the criminal penalties for possessing, selling or manufacturing the dangerous and highly addictive drug.

“We need to ensure that our laws are keeping pace with the goal of putting meth manufacturers and sellers out of business in New York State. The addiction, violence and tragedy that are the byproducts of the rampant production and use of methamphetamine pose unacceptable risks to our neighborhoods, threaten the safety of police officers and first responders, and burden local systems of health care, criminal justice and social services,” said O’Mara. “Regional law enforcement officers continue to do outstanding work to protect our communities. I’m hopeful that these tougher new laws will help in the prosecution and punishment of meth crimes, and as a deterrent. We can’t allow our region or anywhere else in New York State to serve as a safe harbor for meth labs, meth addicts or meth pushers.”

[Read more in today's *Ithaca Journal* and *Hornell Evening Tribune*]

According to a 2009 report from the Rand Corporation, the economic cost of meth use in the United States reached nearly \$24 billion in 2005 and could go as high as \$48 billion.

Legislation introduced in the Senate by O’Mara would:

-- further outlaw the operation of meth labs (S.3639) by increasing the criminal penalties for the possession of methamphetamine manufacturing material and the unlawful manufacture of methamphetamine, implementing a series of increasingly severe felony offenses.

O’Mara stressed that meth manufacturing involves the use of highly explosive, flammable and toxic chemicals, and meth labs pose a significant public health and safety threat, especially if they’re located in residential neighborhoods; and

-- in a similar fashion, increase the criminal penalties for the possession and/or sale of methamphetamine to bring the penalties more in line with the penalties for possessing and/or selling cocaine and heroin (S.3289/A.3528).

The legislation has been introduced in the Assembly by Assemblyman Sean Ryan (D-Erie County) and is co-sponsored by local Assemblyman Phil Palmesano (R-C, Corning).

“These actions would make it easier to prosecute meth crimes and impose tougher criminal penalties to punish meth convicts,” said O’Mara. “We also hope tougher anti-meth laws will act as a stronger deterrent among our young people at risk of falling prey to this cycle of addiction and tragedy.”

O’Mara said that the Legislature and then-Governor George Pataki enacted New York’s first comprehensive anti-meth law in early 2006 following the release of a State Commission on Investigation (SIC) report warning that methamphetamine would become an increasingly dire public health and safety threat unless New York adopted new and tougher laws to combat the drug's proliferation. The 2006 report, "Methamphetamine Use & Manufacture," cautioned that the drug's rapidly growing use and manufacture posed “an urgent threat to public health and safety and without new and tougher laws to combat the threat, New York could become a haven for methamphetamine users and manufacturers." It identified the Southern Tier as a hotbed of criminal meth activity.