



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

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## Press Release - Senator O'Mara Hosting Heroin Task Force Forum in Elmira

PHIL BOYLE May 19, 2014

| ISSUE: **CONTROLLED SUBSTANCES, DRUGS**

| COMMITTEE: **HEROIN TASK FORCE**

### **O'MARA HOLDING PUBLIC ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION ON HEROIN EPIDEMIC**

**Senate task force hearing will help develop recommendations for enforcement, prevention and treatment**

Elmira, N.Y., May 14—State Senator Tom O'Mara (R,C-Big Flats) reminded area residents today

that he will bring the Senate Majority Coalition's Task Force on Heroin and Opioid Addiction to Elmira

College on Friday, May 16, 2014 for a public roundtable discussion on the growing heroin epidemic

regionally and statewide.

The legislative hearing, which will be open to the public, will be held at Elmira College's Hamilton

Hall from 10:00 a.m. to Noon. A live webcast of Friday's roundtable will also be available through O'Mara's

Senate website at [www.omara.nysenate.gov](http://www.omara.nysenate.gov).

The bipartisan Senate task force, on which O'Mara serves as a member, was created earlier this year

at a time when local police departments, including many across the Southern Tier and Finger Lakes regions,

were pointing to the alarming rise in the availability and use of heroin.

"I look forward to this roundtable discussion in Elmira to hear directly from those on the front lines

locally who can help us zero in on the heroin epidemic. We're working to determine the most effective

combination of law enforcement, awareness and education, and treatment and prevention to try to stop the

spread of heroin, better protect our communities and save lives, especially young lives," said O'Mara.

According to figures from Cayuga Addiction Recovery Services, the numbers of 19-to-25 year olds in the Southern Tier and Finger Lakes treated for drug abuse increased more than 35 percent from 2007 to 2012.

The Senate task force has been holding public hearings since early April in every region of the state.

A total of 14 hearings are scheduled.

At the Elmira hearing on Friday, O'Mara and his colleagues will hear testimony from regional law enforcement officers, drug addiction counselors, treatment providers, social services and mental health professionals, and other experts about the range of complex challenges posed by heroin including addiction prevention and treatment options, drug-related crimes, and other community and public safety impacts.

O'Mara, who has been highlighting the proliferation of heroin and meth across the Southern Tier and

Finger Lakes over the past few years, said that the Senate's task force is targeting the alarming rise in heroin

use and addiction across New York and will develop legislative recommendations for combating, preventing

and treating the drug's spread. They want to act on the legislation before the end of the current legislative

session in late June.

A 2012 federal survey on drug use and health reported that the number of people who said they had

used heroin in the past 12 months rose from 373,000 in 2007 to 669,000 people in 2012. The National

Institutes of Health (NIH) has estimated that approximately 23 percent of those who use heroin become

dependent on the highly addictive drug