



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Timothy M. Kennedy

## Senator Kennedy: New Tools to Combat Heroin Epidemic in Legislation Agreed Upon in State Capitol

TIMOTHY M. KENNEDY June 18, 2014

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*With 45 Percent Increase in Heroin Overdoses in Erie County in 2013, Kennedy Has Pushed for Necessary Legislative Actions to Combat Growing Crisis.*

ALBANY, N.Y. – Senator Tim Kennedy, D-Buffalo, is confident a package of reforms agreed upon in the State Capitol will help combat the growing heroin epidemic facing communities across our state. As this public-health crisis continues to grow more dire, Kennedy believes these new laws will help prevent addiction and reduce drug abuse.

“Western New York is enduring an epidemic of overdoses resulting from the surging abuse of painkillers and heroin, and local families have been calling for action to help put a stop to this growing public health crisis. With this strong series of reforms, we will have new tools to combat the heroin crisis,” said Senator Kennedy. “These new laws will prove to be crucial steps forward in our collective fight against drug abuse and addiction, and will undoubtedly save lives.”

The Erie County Department of Health reports there were 29 heroin overdose deaths across the county in 2013, a 45 percent increase from the 20 heroin overdoses in 2012. In total, there were 106 overdose deaths resulting from all types of opiates, including heroin and prescription painkillers like hydrocodone and oxycodone, countywide in 2013. That’s an increase of 32 deaths, compared to 2009 numbers, according to a recent Buffalo News report.

Many of the reforms included in the final legislative package were pushed by Senator Kennedy and Senate Democrats in the weeks since they [outlined a set of proposals to fight the heroin epidemic](#).

“Expanding addiction treatment, improving public awareness and strengthening enforcement will help protect New Yorkers and our communities as this crisis grows even more severe,” Kennedy said. “Together, this series of solutions will help prevent the tragedies and struggles that so many New York families have had to endure as result of this dangerous epidemic.”

Additionally, Senator Kennedy is urging the state to pass legislation, which was not included in the negotiated plan, to [require continuing education for health care practitioners to ensure all are appropriately trained in the prevention, treatment and mitigation of opiate addiction](#). Senator Kennedy has long been pushing for legislation to enact this needed reform.

“The dangers of addiction are real, and it is absolutely essential that we ensure health care practitioners are appropriately trained and patients are fully aware of the addiction risks posed by opiate painkillers, as well as effective methods to overcome addiction or migrate away from addictive drugs,” Kennedy said.

In recent years, New York State has taken major steps forward in the fight to end prescription drug abuse and addiction. Senator Kennedy has been demanding action to help address the epidemic, and new legislation is effectively combating the crisis. The I-STOP legislation passed in 2012 has prevented doctor-shopping, reduced painkiller diversion and limited the misuse and abuse of controlled substances through tighter controls and monitoring systems. In 2011, the state enacted the 911 Good Samaritan Law which encourages individuals to call 911 if they witness a drug overdose. Meanwhile, ongoing efforts to expand the availability of Narcan, the heroin-overdose antidote, is already helping to save lives locally and across the state.

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*Senator Timothy M. Kennedy represents the New York State Senate’s 63rd District, which is comprised of the town of Cheektowaga, the city of Lackawanna and nearly all of the city of Buffalo. More information is available at <http://kennedy.nysenate.gov>.*