



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Thomas F. O'Mara

Following a string of recent local incidents, O'Mara renews call for legislation targeting meth labs ~ Repeat offenders, those cooking meth in presence of a child, would face harsher penalties

THOMAS F. O'MARA September 22, 2016

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**Elmira, N.Y., September 22**—The recent string of methamphetamine-related arrests, convictions and discoveries across the Southern Tier and Finger Lakes is prompting State

Senator Tom O'Mara (R,C,I-Big Flats) to renew his call for approving legislation he sponsors targeting the resurgence of methamphetamine-related crimes locally and across New York State by significantly increasing the criminal penalties for manufacturing, possessing and selling the illegal and highly addictive drug.

"Meth labs, including the increasingly prevalent one-pot method, pose unacceptable risks to our neighborhoods, roadsides and wooded areas where children and others can be exposed to the hazardous and toxic residues of these labs. They threaten the safety of police officers and first responders, highway crews, hikers, kids playing outdoors and the public at large," said O'Mara. "We need tougher laws against these dangerous and irresponsible meth cookers who have no regard for the health and safety of the rest of us."

O'Mara was referring to a recent string of meth-related incidents locally including:

> yesterday, when **police officers in the city of Elmira, while conducting a safety check at a residence** on the city's Southside at the request of another area resident, discovered a one-pot meth lab;

> earlier this month, after receiving a tip, three people were taken into custody by **Elmira police officers following the reported discovery of a methamphetamine lab in the 700 block of Roe Avenue;**

> also earlier this month, two off-duty area police officers – an Elmira police officer and a Chemung County Sheriff's deputy – **discovered, while fishing in the area of Johnson Road in the Town of Cayuta, what was later reported to be a recent meth lab dump site;** and

> yesterday, **Christopher Coy of Watkins Glen received an 18-month prison sentence** following his conviction of manufacturing meth at his residence at 117 E. Second St. in Watkins Glen in July 2015.

The Senate has consistently given strong, bipartisan support to O'Mara's meth proposals over the past several years, but the measures have stalled in the Democratic-controlled Assembly. O'Mara noted, however, that his legislation has gained Democratic sponsorship in the Assembly and is currently sponsored by Assemblyman Sean Ryan (D-Erie County).

Over the past year, Southern Tier and Finger Lakes law enforcement officials have issued warnings about the increasing disposal of 'one-pot' meth labs along regional highways and roadsides, and in wooded areas, where they pose a danger to local residents, children, hikers and highway crews, as well as police officers and first responders.

One piece of legislation ([S1440/A5617](#)) O'Mara sponsors targets the operation of meth labs and would increase the criminal penalties for the possession of meth manufacturing material and the unlawful manufacture of meth, implementing a series of increasingly severe felony offenses.

O'Mara has highlighted the increasing frequency of meth lab-related arrests and other incidents across the Southern Tier and Finger Lakes regions over the past few years as the impetus for imposing stricter criminal penalties for possessing the material to make or for manufacturing the dangerous and highly addictive drug. The legislation he's sponsoring includes a provision making it a Class A-1 felony, punishable by a maximum sentence of 20 years in prison, for criminals convicted of operating a meth lab for the second time in five years. That's currently a Class B felony that carries a maximum prison sentence of nine years. The legislation also establishes the crime of manufacturing meth in the presence of a child under the age of 16 as a Class B felony. The possession of methamphetamine manufacturing material in the first degree would increase from a Class E to a Class D felony, punishable by up to two-and-a-half years in prison.

In addition to this legislation and **a comprehensive package of new heroin-related laws he's co-sponsored as a member of the Senate Task Force on Heroin and Opioid Addiction**, O'Mara is also sponsoring the following meth-related legislation also approved by the Senate to:

> increase the criminal penalties for the possession and/or sale of the drug by implementing an increasingly severe set of felony offenses (**S1150/A5577**). If enacted into law, state penalties in response to meth would be brought more in line with the penalties for possessing and selling cocaine and heroin; and

> enhance the ability of local police and district attorneys to track and prosecute violations of restrictions on over-the-counter sales of cold medications that are key ingredients used in the manufacturing of methamphetamine (**S627/A468**).

“From bath salts and heroin to meth and synthetic drugs, the resurgence of these drugs has become alarming across the Southern Tier and Finger Lakes regions,” said O'Mara. “The only byproducts of these drugs are addiction, overdoses, tragic deaths and violence. They increasingly burden local systems of health care, criminal justice and social services. Awareness and education, prevention and treatment are fundamental responses. But so are tougher laws and criminal penalties, and it's time for the Assembly Democratic leadership to join the Senate in acting.”