



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Chris Jacobs

## Jacobs Announces Action on Lyme Disease Legislation

SENATOR JACOBS May 15, 2017

| ISSUE: **LYME AND TICK-BORNE DISEASES**



(Albany, NY) – New York State Senator Chris Jacobs (60th SD) announced the passage of a trio of bills today that strengthen the state’s efforts to combat Lyme and tick-borne diseases. Jacobs, a member of the Senate Task Force on Lyme and Tick-Borne Diseases, was a co-sponsor of the bills that were approved, and said he believes the legislation will be instrumental in implementing the Task Force’s goals of improving prevention, diagnosis, and treatment.

“Lyme disease is a very serious and growing public health problem, complicated by the difficulty in diagnosing it and made more burdensome by the exorbitant costs patients bear with long term treatment,” said Senator Jacobs. “Passage of these Lyme disease bills is a great next step in our collective efforts to advance research, education and prevention so we can improve outcomes for families affected by these illnesses.”

According to reports by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), New York State has the third highest number of confirmed cases of Lyme disease in the entire country. While this problem has historically been concentrated on Long Island and in the Hudson Valley, Department of Health reports have confirmed that it is quickly migrating to other counties across New York. Since Lyme reporting became available in 1986, 95,000 cases of Lyme have been reported to the state. Locally, Jacobs has been working with Lyme WNY, a group of dedicated citizens and Lyme disease sufferers who also confirmed the growing number of cases in Western New York.

Today’s bills help address issues being raised by this spread and include:

Bill [S2168](#) takes the first major step towards addressing the lack of insurance coverage available to those diagnosed with Lyme disease. Currently, health insurance companies are not required to cover long-term treatment from chronic Lyme or other related diseases, which is devastating for many New Yorkers. People suffering from chronic Lyme disease can experience extreme fatigue, nausea, depression, joint pain and many other symptoms. The bill requires the State Health Care Quality and Cost Containment Commission to meet annually and to submit a report on the impact of providing insurance coverage for Lyme and Tick-Borne disease.

Bill [S2588](#) provides homeowners with vital and reliable information on the best way to protect their property from ticks. People should be aware of the EPA’s approved pesticides

that are recommended for tick prevention and the best methods to use pesticides to better protect both people and pets from exposure to ticks on their property. The bill directs the Commissioner of Environmental Conservation to develop guidelines for best practices in treating residential properties to reduce exposure to ticks.

Bill [S2621](#) helps ensure medical professionals are properly trained to treat patients with Lyme or other tick-borne diseases. The bill authorizes the Department of Health (DOH) to award grants for graduate medical education in Lyme and tick-borne diseases, designate organizations as centers of excellence for Lyme and tick-borne diseases, and designate Lyme and tick-borne-disease resource centers.

Today the Senate also approved a resolution ([J1493](#)) that designates May 2017 as Lyme Disease Awareness Month in the State of New York. The resolution helps focus on this significant and complex disease, provides information on and raises public awareness of its causes, effects and treatments, and underscores important education and research efforts surrounding Lyme and tick-borne diseases.

While the Northeast United States remains one of the hardest-hit regions for Lyme and other tick-borne diseases, the Senate has been actively working to reverse this trend. Its Task Force was created in 2013 to engage stakeholders and develop legislation to address Lyme disease. This year alone, the Task Force successfully secured \$400,000 in the newly-adopted state budget for research, education, and prevention efforts. It will continue to build upon past legislative successes, including two new laws passed last year that requires the Department of Health to design a Lyme and tick-borne disease prevention program, and requires the state to create age-appropriate educational materials that would be readily available to schools. Students will learn how to identify ticks, the procedures for safe removal, and the best practices for protection from ticks.

“In a state as compassionate as ours and a state that is so progressive and on the cutting edge in medical advancements and quality of care, families should not have to choose between enduring a tremendous financial burden or sacrificing their quality of life,” said Jacobs. “The action we took today and the funding approved in the budget are all steps in the right direction the Senator concluded.