



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Fred Akshar

Akshar Joins Croci in Pushing for Passage of Law Designed To Prevent Fentanyl-Laced Heroin Deaths

FRED AKSHAR September 8, 2017

| ISSUE: **COMBATING HEROIN AND OPIOID ADDICTION, HEROIN & OPIOID ADDICTION TASK FORCE**



On the heels of this week's deadly fentanyl laced oxycodone seizure in upstate New York, Senator Fred Akshar joined Senator Tom Croci in urging the passage of legislation to amend the public health law that would add new derivatives of fentanyl to the controlled substance schedule. The bill would also increase criminal penalties for the sale of an opiate containing a fentanyl derivative. Senate Majority Leader John Flanagan and the Chairs of the Senate

Task Force on Heroin and Opioid Addiction all support the push.

q

"We have a moral obligation to work to prevent the loss of life due to dangerous fentanyl-laced drugs and derivatives," said Senator Fred Akshar. "Families are being ripped apart by opioid addiction across our state, and fentanyl has become a fast-track to overdose deaths. The Assembly must wake up and act immediately to help stem the tide of this epidemic and give law enforcement the tools they need to get purveyors of this poison off the streets."

"The fentanyl laced drug seizure upstate is hitting way to close to home," said Senator Tom Croci, member of the Senate's Joint Task Force on Heroin and Opioid Addiction. "It is frightening to think the number of lives that could have been lost if the perpetrators would have been successful in getting those pills on the street. As if heroin on its own was not bad enough, we now have fentanyl and its derivatives in the mix taking an even deadlier toll. I am strongly urging Assembly Speaker Carl Heastie to passage of this bill his number one priority when the Legislative session reconvenes in January. I equally urge Governor Cuomo to sign this legislation into law immediately following. Waiting will serve no purpose other than to raise the death toll associated with this dangerous drug."

Senate Majority Leader John J. Flanagan said, "We have all witnessed the deadly effects of opioid abuse and must give law enforcement the tools they need to prevent the illegal use of dangerously potent drugs like fentanyl. Thanks to Senator Croci, the Senate acted earlier this year by passing his bill to help prevent fentanyl from taking more lives, but we need our partners in government to make this a priority and enact the bill into law."

Fentanyl is a strong pain medication, that when administered in a medical setting, is often combined with anesthesia to prevent surgery related pain. When improperly used, the *b*

effects of fentanyl can lead to serious or life threatening respiratory problems.

Numerous reports indicate that fentanyl has a similar euphoric effect to morphine and heroin. However, according to the New York Times, fentanyl is 100 times as powerful as morphine and much deadlier than heroin since it requires more naloxone (a drug used to reverse the effects of an opiate overdose) to counteract life threatening overdoses. The prevalence of fentanyl abuse has been on the rise. Because fentanyl is cheaper than heroin, drug dealers have been mixing fentanyl with heroin in order to produce a cheaper product, which far too often results in a lethal combination.

According to the CDC – National Center for Health Statistics, drug overdoses are expected to remain the leading cause of death for Americans under 50, as synthetic opioids — primarily fentanyl and its analogues — continue to push the death count higher. Drug deaths involving fentanyl more than doubled from 2015 to 2017, up 540% in 3 years.

Senator Tom Croci introduced Senate Bill S933A during the last legislative session where it passed unanimously by the Senate. The bill, co-sponsored by Assemblyman Al Graf, failed to make it out of the health committee prior to the end of session.

###