



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

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Legislative Efforts to Protect Your Family from Lyme & Tick-Borne Diseases

SENATOR MICHAEL H. RANZENHOFER July 18, 2018

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



Senator Ranzenhofer's column appeared in the Amherst and Clarence Bees on July 18th. Lyme and tick-borne diseases cause debilitating, sometimes deadly, results. Across the United States, the number of people being diagnosed with diseases transmitted by mosquito, tick and flea bites has tripled. In New York, the number of confirmed cases of Lyme disease is the third highest in the nation, according to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC).

Long Island and the Hudson Valley were some of the first areas for this problem to be concentrated. Now, it is quickly moving to Western New York and other parts of the state.

As your State Senator, I have been working with my colleagues to reverse this trend. I have supported comprehensive legislation, in the State Senate, aimed at increasing public awareness, treatment and prevention of Lyme and other tick-borne illnesses.

The legislation includes creating a new pilot program for testing these types of diseases in children; installing tick-warning signs at state parks; and studying the current scope of health insurance coverage for treating these diseases.

Additionally, the legislative package also contains a proposal to establish a standard protocol for the diagnosis and treatment of Lyme and other tick-borne diseases. Under the proposal, the Commissioner of Health would work with health care providers, as well as experts, to develop a standard process for patient notification of related symptoms, risk factors and diagnosis.

Lastly, in the 2018-19 State Budget, I helped to secure a historic level of funding— \$1 million— to fund prevention, treatment and research. This important investment will help to address this serious public health issue.

While this new funding will help to protect all New Yorkers from these diseases, you can also take preventative measures to reduce your risk, too, including:

Stay on the center of trails and paths- don't brush against vegetation if you can avoid it.

Wear long pants and long-sleeved shirts, and tuck the legs into your socks or boots. This helps keep ticks from reaching your skin.

Wear light colored and tightly woven clothing. This makes it easier to see ticks.

Check yourself, your children and pets at least once per day for ticks. A tick is so small it can easily go unnoticed. Pay special attention to the backs of knees, behind the ears, the scalp, armpits and back.

Use repellents that contain 20% or more DEET on the exposed skin for protection that lasts up to several hours. Parents should apply this product to their children, avoiding hands, eyes and mouth.

Products that contain permethrin can be used to treat boots, clothing and camping gear. Always follow product instructions.

As your State Senator, I will continue my efforts to make even more progress in addressing this critical public health issue. I will be sure to keep you posted.