



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Thomas F. O'Mara

O'Mara urges governor to sign legislation creating new 'Opioid Settlement Fund': O'Mara co-sponsors legislation to direct funds to opioid education, prevention, treatment and recovery programs and services

THOMAS F. O'MARA June 24, 2021

| ISSUE: **BATTLING THE OPIOID EPIDEMIC**



The opioid abuse epidemic has taken thousands of lives and ravaged communities and families across the Southern Tier and Finger Lakes regions, and throughout New York State. The creation of this "Opioid Settlement Fund" will finally ensure that any funding the state receives from opioid-related settlements will be dedicated to education, prevention, treatment, and recovery programs and services. It's the right thing to do.

Elmira, N.Y., June 24—State Senator Tom O'Mara (R,C,I-Big Flats) today called on Governor Andrew Cuomo to sign into law legislation O'Mara co-sponsors to establish an "Opioid Settlement Fund" to require that any settlement funds New York State receives from lawsuits and other actions against opioid manufacturers and distributors be dedicated to opioid prevention, treatment, and recovery programs and services.

The legislation was unanimously approved by the Senate and Assembly in the closing days of this year's legislative session. It has been delivered to Cuomo for final action.

"The opioid abuse epidemic has taken thousands of lives and ravaged communities and families across the Southern Tier and Finger Lakes regions, and throughout New York State," said O'Mara. "The creation of this 'Opioid Settlement Fund' will finally ensure that any funding the state receives from opioid-related settlements will be dedicated to education, prevention, treatment, and recovery programs and services. It's the right thing to do."

Specifically, the legislation (S7194/A6395) states that "all funds received by the state as the result of a settlement or a judgment in litigation against opioid manufacturers, distributors, dispensers, consultants, or resellers shall be deposited into the opioid settlement fund, and that such funds shall not supplant or replace existing state funding."

New York State Attorney General Letitia James has spearheaded lawsuits and other actions to hold opioid manufacturers and distributors accountable for the epidemic, including one of the nation's most extensive lawsuits just getting underway.

O'Mara said that the state stands to collect millions upon millions of dollars in settlement funds. He called the legislation one of the highlights of the Legislature's 2021 session and urged Cuomo to sign the measure into law.

O'Mara said, "This legislation, which I was proud to help sponsor, would put a stop in this instance to a long-standing and questionable practice of New York State taking settlement funds and dumping them into the state's general fund to be used for any purpose at all. What we say here is: Not this time. Not when the opioid crisis has been ravaging families and communities throughout the past decade. Not when the opioid epidemic has cost thousands of lives. Not when this public health emergency continues to demand resources for education and prevention, treatment and recovery."

State statistics show that opioid overdose deaths increased by 200% in New York State between 2010 and 2017.