

WAR ON DRUGS

# Meth legislation asks for stricter punishment

ELMIRA — State Senator Tom O'Mara (R-Big Flats) is continuing to sponsor legislation 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.



O'Mara

One piece of legislation 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. The legislation is currently in the Senate Codes Committee.

"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 cooks who have no regard for the health and safety of the rest of us."

Over the past year, Southern Tier 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.

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 a series of heroin-related measures he's co-sponsoring as a member of the Senate Task

Force on Heroin and Opioid Addiction, O'Mara has also reintroduced and is again sponsoring the following meth-related legislation to:

The legislation was recently approved by the Senate Codes Committee and is expected to soon be voted on by the full Senate. 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.

The Senate has consistently given strong, bipartisan support to O'Mara's meth proposals over the past several years, but the measures have always stalled in the Democratic-controlled Assembly.

"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 us in acting this session."

down" according to the Casella representative. "It costs me \$30 a ton more to recycle it than to bury it."

As a result of China flooding the aluminum market, there is a vastly lowered demand for recycled materials worldwide.

"The Chinese market has dried up," said the Casella representative, and the trend isn't expected to change any time soon.

Reed hopes the committee's efforts will help alleviate the situation.

Reed believes that the aluminum issue is just one symptom of a wider epidemic of China's deceptive trade practices.

"The final number is still being tallied, but I know Charles Boustany (R-La.) and Jason Smith (R-Mo.) on the committee have joined me in making sure our voice on the committee is heard by the chairman," he said.

According to the Congressman other smaller scrap metal and recycling operations have had to close their doors lately.

"I am aware, and it's something we're very concerned about, and it's not just China dumping scrap metal," Reed said.

Reed believes the government already has the tools to hold China and others accountable, but it's a matter of communicating it to negotiators.

"We need to ask our trade representatives in the administration to vigorously enforce all provisions of existing trade agreements as well as the World Trade Organization

provisions available to us," he said.

"Overall, the more we level the playing field you get prices more reflective of a true marketplace, and if that means people get a little more out of their scrap metal for example — I can see that having a positive impact on our trash haulers," he said.

"We hope that lightens the load for consumers and individuals," he said.

In the last week, American banks with exposure to China took a hit in their stock prices as the nation considers devaluing their currency, a practice Reed believes artificially advantages their products over those made in America. Slowed growth in GDP and manufacturing make that more likely according to the Congressman.

"I'm concerned China is going to engage in one of their old, well established practices in currency manipulation," he said. "We need to call them out on it and make sure they let their currency float, and don't unfairly adjust it."

The calls for an investigation into the aluminum trade come on the heels of the Senate passage of the Trade Facilitation and Trade Enforcement Act.

The bill, which Reed supported earlier this year, sets up a framework to ensure international companies abide by appropriate trade rules and enacts swift consequences for non-compliance and violations. The bill will go on to the President for his signature.

## WEATHER

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temperatures fluctuating around the freezing mark, precipitation made a seamless transition between rain, ice, and snow a number of times throughout the morning.

As the day proceeded, snow took hold and accumulated another 3-4 inches on top of the icy mix, making for even more dangerous travels.

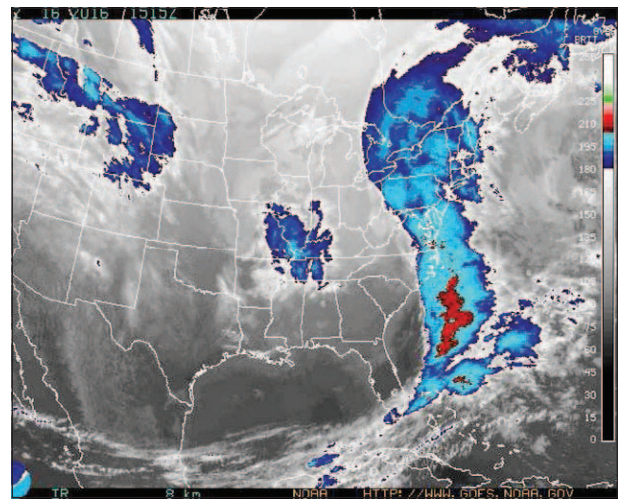
The City's Department of Public Works deployed plows, but precipitation just kept coming. Due to scheduled vacations, city officials were unavailable to comment on their strategy for handling the unusual mix of weather.

As of about 11 a.m. NYSEG had reported 1,335 customers in Allegany and 3,148 in Steuben County without power. Outages in Allegany County affected customers in Alfred, Almond, Birdsall, Burns, Grove, Hartsville, Ward, West Almond and West Union.

In Steuben County, customers in Alfred, Avoca, Bath, Campbell, Cohocton, Corning, Dansville, Greenwood, Hartsville, Hornellsville, Howard, Lindley, Prattsburg, Pultney, Springwater, Troupsburg, Tuscarora, Tyrone, Urbana, Wayland, West Union and Wheeler lost power on varying scales.

Most of the incidents were caused by downed trees taking out power lines.

The City of Hornell went largely unscathed as police reported having just a handful of minor weather-related



A weather map provided by the National Weather Service shows New York State squarely in the eye of a winter storm that dropped a mix of precipitation Monday night and throughout the day on Tuesday, making travel treacherous. NOAA SATELLITE IMAGE

responses for power lines being down and one minor accident.

A travel advisory was issued for Steuben County on Tuesday due to the persistent conditions.

"Steady snowfall this afternoon, along with this morning's sicing will continue to create hazardous driving conditions at times as well as possible power outages and flooding in low lying areas," the advisory warned.

Similar recommendations were made in Allegany County.

"Heavy snowfall along with rain and ice has created hazardous travel conditions throughout the county. Based upon current forecasts and conditions, the Allegany County Sheriff's Office and the Allegany County Office of Emergency Services recommends no unnecessary travel," the Allegany County Sheriff's Office cautioned.

In Livingston County, deputies were kept busy

responding to multiple weather-related traffic incidents.

"The Livingston County Sheriff's Office has received and handled numerous vehicles off the roadway and motor vehicle crashes due to the snow covered roads," they reported.

Even a few faithful newspaper carriers executing their duties found themselves in ditches as a result of the slick road conditions.

However, city officials hope to have the wintry mess mostly cleared by morning. To aid snow removal, a robo-call sent by the City of Hornell's CodeRED Emergency Alert System told residents that all vehicles must be off the streets by 8 p.m. Tuesday.

Snow will remain a staple of the forecast through Wednesday, but meteorologists are calling for only a 30-40 percent chance of snow with negligible accumulations of an inch or less.

## FIRE

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an autopsy on the body found by investigators inside the home was set to be conducted by the Monroe County Medical Examiner's Office Tuesday. The body was ordered there by Steuben County Coroner Brian May at the scene Monday morning.

Final 2015 Steuben County assessment rolls claim that the property is owned by 60-year-old David O'Dell.

The key now for investigators is to cut down the list of possible causes before coming to a conclusion.

"As far as the cause of origin, there is a number of things, a number of factors



The investigation is still ongoing into a fire that claimed the life of an individual on 9458 New Galen Road in the Town of Wayland early Monday morning. JASMINE WILLIS/THE EVENING TRIBUNE

that could not be ruled out," Eaton said.

"Accidental factors cannot be ruled out and that's part

of the investigation, is to eliminate accidental causes for the fire so that process is continuing."

## EAGLE

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— returning to the nation's capital," Chavonda Jacobs-Young, Agricultural Research Service administrator, said. "It is truly a privilege to be a part of this wonderful experience."

Work on the high-definition video cameras — one on each side of the nest — began after the birds left the nest last summer.

AEF officials traveled to the arboretum in August to install cameras and equipment around the tree with the help of experienced climbers. The arboretum then ran a half-mile of fiber-optic cable to the cameras' control box about 200 feet from the base of the tree. All of this is powered through a solar array designed and built by Alfred State students and staff.

A live stream of the eagle nest is also available at the U.S. National Arboretum.

"Mr. President" and "The



Alfred State students and staff created a solar array that allows online viewers to watch "Mr. President" and "The First Lady," a mated pair of bald eagles, build their nest at the U.S. National Arboretum in Washington, D.C. PHOTO PROVIDED

First Lady" returned to their nest in October and have been seen building their nest with twigs and grass since January in preparation for laying eggs. Cameras protect the pair by limiting disturbances by visitors while allowing people to view them — people, noise and other distractions may cause the eagles to abandon their nest and eggs. Access to the area within a 660-foot

radius around the site is restricted during the nesting period.

The first egg was laid in the nest on Feb. 10 and a second egg is expected soon.

It takes an average of 35 days for eggs to hatch, which means that there may be eaglets as early as March, depending on the number of eggs laid and when incubation begins.

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