



NYSAR³ Supports A5465 (Sweeney) / S3985-A (Grisanti) Medication Disposal Demonstration Program Bill

The New York State Association for Reduction, Reuse and Recycling (NYSAR³) is New York State's premier recycling association. NYSAR³ is the New York State affiliate of the National Recycling Coalition with over 150 members representing municipal recycling leaders, not-for-profit environmental organizations, businesses and individuals with expertise in waste reduction, reuse, recycling and composting.

TITLE OF BILL: An act to amend the environmental conservation law, in relation to implementing a demonstration drug disposal program; and providing for the repeal of such provisions upon the expiration thereof

PURPOSE: Expired, unwanted, or unused medications require proper disposal in order to prevent accidental ingestion and/or unintended environmental harm.

SUMMARY OF PROVISIONS: This bill would require the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) to, in consultation with the State Police, establish a one-year demonstration drug disposal program in at least three publicly-available State Police facilities located in urban, suburban and rural areas; maintain on its website a list of State Police facilities participating in such demonstration drug disposal program, any information regarding drug disposal procedures for such facilities as well as any existing information concerning drug disposal; and at the close of the demonstration program, prepare a report detailing:

1. the quantities of drugs collected;
2. the effectiveness of each facility location;
3. information detailing the acceptance methods made available; and
4. recommendations for any legislative action.

NYSAR³ Statement of Support: Medication collection events and take-back programs **are infrequent and may not be widely accessible to all residents in the state.** A more consistently available and coordinated effort is required now to further prevent continued improper and unsafe disposal of medications. Drop-off locations for unused, unwanted and expired medications at state police facilities will provide residents with a consistent and secure alternative to flushing unwanted medications; a practice which has become commonplace in the absence of formal medication disposal policies. This legislation would establish a demonstration medication disposal program in order to provide data that could be used to determine the most effective methods of disposal. The demonstration medication disposal program, if successful, has the potential to expand to the 200 state police headquarters and stations located throughout New York which would provide most residents of New York State access to safe and convenient disposal for their unused, unwanted and expired medications.

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According to the Harvard Medical School (Harvard Health Letter; June 2011) “we, as consumers, are responsible for a hefty percentage of the pharmaceutical and personal care products that wind up in lakes, rivers, and streams. The typical American medicine cabinet is full of unused and expired drugs, only a fraction of which get disposed of properly. Data collected from a medication collection program in California in 2007 suggest that about half of all medications — both prescription and over-the-counter — are discarded. . . A study conducted by the U.S. Geological Survey found measurable amounts of one or more medications in 80% of the water samples drawn from a network of 139 streams in 30 states. The drugs identified included a witches' brew of antibiotics, antidepressants, blood thinners, heart medications (ACE inhibitors, calcium-channel blockers, digoxin), hormones (estrogen, progesterone, testosterone), and painkillers.”

New York should promote the safe disposal of unused, unwanted and expired medications, while preventing adverse impacts to the environment related to improper disposal. One source of medications in the state’s waterways is wastewater discharge from hospitals, institutions and individuals that for years have been instructed to dispose of their unwanted medications by flushing or pouring them down the drain. Proper disposal of unused and unwanted medications is a critical strategy for avoiding unnecessary discharges of medications into wastewater treatment systems and ultimately into waterways.

In order to address the emerging environmental and public health concerns associated with improper disposal of medications, several communities and pharmacies in New York State have voluntarily established take-back programs. Some communities have included medications in their household hazardous waste collection events, while pharmacies and other communities have established stand-alone medication take-back events. Medication collection events and take-back programs have proven effective, **but are infrequent and may not be widely accessible to all residents in the state.**