

Expanding the social host law

■ Amendment would add use of opioids, other drugs

■ Nassau also looks to drop age from 21 to 18

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Adults who knowingly allow minors to consume opioids and other controlled substances in their homes could face jail time under an amendment to Nassau's social host law that majority Republican legislators proposed Tuesday.

Current law prohibits adults from allowing individuals younger than 21 to drink alcohol on their premises or failing to take action after learning of underage drinking.

The proposed amendment would expand the law to prohibit adults from knowingly permitting anyone younger than 18 to take opioids such as oxycodone, as well as marijuana, heroin, cocaine and anabolic steroids.

"The Nassau County Legislature is going to fill a gaping hole in our social host law," Presiding Officer Richard Nicolello (R-New Hyde Park) said at a news conference in Mineola.

Legis. Laura Schaefer (R-Westbury) said the change to the social host law is necessary to battle an opioid crisis that claimed the lives of some 600 Long Islanders last year, including about 200 in Nassau.

"We need to make sure that we have every tool in our toolbox to battle this problem, to battle this epidemic," Schaefer said. "It's not something going away quickly."

Violations of the social host law are misdemeanors. The fine is \$250 for a first offense and \$500 for a second, while a third offense is punishable by

a \$1,000 fine and up to a year in jail.

The amendment would not interfere with the state's Good Samaritan Law, which encourages people to call 911 without fear of arrest if they witness a drug overdose, backers said.

Acting Nassau Police Commissioner Patrick Ryder said his department averages more than 1,400 arrests annually related to heroin and opioids. The county has issued five social host law violations in each of the past two years, police said.

Among the more troubling trends, he said, are parties in which minors gather around a table with a bowl of pills in the middle alongside a dose of Narcan, the opioid antidote.

"The first kid that goes down they Narcan him to bring him back," Ryder said. "And they actually sometimes video it and put it on social media. So we are going to be supportive of this change because it's time we start holding the adults responsible for what's going on in their home."

Ryder said law enforcement will determine enforcement of the law on a case-by-case basis if the drugs were brought into the home without the adult's consent and the parent is unaware of a minor's behavior.

But Ryder said "parents have to be held responsible to have this knowledge and do their due diligence."

Nassau District Attorney Madeline Singas said the proposed legislation should be a "wake-up call to parents that they will be held responsible. They can't turn a blind eye. When their kids are downstairs having a party they should go down and see what's going on. There's no excuse that 'I wasn't aware of it.'"



Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo introduces Captain in Albany on Monday. ■ Video: [newsday.com/state](https://www.newsday.com/state)

Mansion's new Captain

BY RACHEL UDA
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There's a new top dog in Albany.

Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo introduced Captain, a 14-week-old puppy and the newest addition to his administration, at a news conference at the Executive Mansion on Monday.

Cuomo said his daughters pleaded for the puppy, a

Siberian and German shepherd mix with a "little Malamute in him."

"This was the idea of my daughters, who had to have a puppy, had to have a puppy. They are nowhere to be found now," Cuomo said, as Captain squirmed in his arms. "Dad has the puppy."

The governor's daughters also picked the dog's name, Cuomo said, adding that he

would have preferred "Excelsior," the state's motto.

Cuomo said he's lost a little sleep house-training the puppy, but Captain seems to be making good progress so far.

"He keeps me up all night, that dog," Cuomo said. "It never fails and he has a howl that you can hear through the whole house when he has to go."

POT 'HOLIDAY' LINKED TO RISE IN FATAL CRASHES

The Associated Press

CHICAGO — Marijuana users' self-proclaimed holiday is linked with a slight increase in fatal U.S. car crashes, an analysis of 25 years of data found.

The study lacks evidence on whether pot was involved in any of the April 20 crashes, but marijuana can impair driving ability. Previous studies have shown that many pot-using motorists drive after partaking and think it's safe to do so.

The researchers analyzed U.S. government data on fatal traffic accidents from 1992 — shortly after 4/20 was popularized as a pot holiday in High

Times magazine — through 2016. They compared driver deaths on that date with deaths on a day the week before and the week after during the study period.

Deaths increased slightly in most but not all states, amounting to an overall increased risk of 12 percent — or an extra 142 driver deaths linked with the holiday, said lead author Dr. John Staples at the University of British Columbia.

Most accidents had no police data on drug testing so there's no way to confirm that marijuana was involved, but researchers think the drug was responsible for some crashes.

The study was published Monday in JAMA Internal Medicine. "It's a really relevant question to be thinking about now since legalization seems to be progressing across the United States and in Canada," Staples said. Marijuana is legal for medical use in most U.S. states and in Canada; recreational use has been legalized in nine states plus Washington, D.C.

According to the National Institute on Drug Abuse, marijuana can impair driving ability. However, the U.S. agency also notes that directly linking marijuana with car crashes can be difficult because it's often used while drinking alcohol.