

Legislature Cracks Down on Meth Production

Missouri is famous for many things. From its rolling Ozark mountains to its caves, springs and rivers our state is blessed with beautiful natural scenery. We are also famous for a wide variety of things like Kansas City Bar-B-Q, the St. Louis Arch, our professional sports teams and our tourist destinations like Branson. The “Show-Me State” has also produced native sons and daughters who have contributed much to our nation’s progress and history. These include Mark Twain, George Washington Carver, Harry Truman and many others.

However, there are some things we are becoming famous for that cause me great concern. One of these is the production of the extremely dangerous drug called “meth.” When ranked with our sister states in terms of population Missouri is nowhere near the top but in terms of meth production we are number one in the nation. While we can all agree that we want our state to excel in most things, we do not want the dubious distinction of being the meth producing capitol of the United States.

One of the reasons it is so difficult to stop the production of meth is that all of the ingredients can be purchased from local stores. Unlike cocaine or heroin that are grown in remote parts of the world and must be smuggled across the border by elaborate networks run by foreign drug cartels, meth can be created from simple ingredients and cooked in a house or even in a small mobile lab stored in the trunk of a car.

This session, the legislature responded to this crisis by passing a bill to crack down on the producers of this dangerous drug by choking off their supply of raw materials used to cook meth. One of the most vital ingredients of meth is found in common cold medicines like Sudafed that contain ephedrine or pseudoephedrine. Missouri law already limited how much cold medicine a person could buy but drug dealers were simply driving around to different stores and buying small quantities from each until they had enough to make meth.

The legislation we passed this session will bring this practice to a grinding halt. It requires that a pharmacist or his staff must sell medicines in tablet form containing pseudoephedrine. Also, the person buying these medicines will have to list his or her name, address and the amount of medicine he buys. This information will be available for law enforcement officials to review in order to pick out drug dealers who are shopping around for unusually large quantities of cold medicines.

I have concerns that people who simply want to find relief from a common cold are going to be inconvenienced by these new requirements when they go to the drugstore for medicine. However, the bill does contain some provisions that should help. It law does not apply to liquid or gel caps and even though most cold medicines will have be sold by a pharmacist, consumers will still not have to have a prescription for these medications.

It is unfortunate that we are forced to take measures that will no doubt inconvenience law-abiding citizens but the alternative is to allow the dangerous production and use of meth to spread in Missouri. It is my hope that this new law will take Missouri out of the limelight for meth production and will let us be famous for all the really wonderful things in our state.

If you have comments or questions about this week's column or any other matter involving state government, please do not hesitate to contact me. You can reach my office by e-mail at matt_bartle@senate.state.mo.us. Thank you again for making it possible for me to serve in the Missouri Senate.

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