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The Cauthorn Report

Two Weeks Notice: Anti-Meth Bill Works

JEFFERSON CITY, MO - Tougher meth laws have been on the books for merely a few weeks and already authorities have made their first arrest under the new guidelines. After reviewing records from several pharmacies, law enforcement officials noticed the trend of an individual buying excessive amounts of products containing pseudoephedrine - a key meth ingredient. Already we have one less meth cook, one less lab, and the journey to reducing this plague truly begins.

Senate Bill 10, which I sponsored and is now law, is designed to help our law-enforcement officials in the fight against meth. This new law limits access to a key component of meth, cutting drug cookers off from nearly endless supply lines. Also, law-enforcement officials will be able to identify who is buying excessively large amounts of cold pills to smoke out cooks and bust labs.

Under the new law, powder pill forms of medicine containing ephedrine or pseudoephedrine will now be kept behind the counter and can only be sold by pharmacists or registered technicians. Customers will be limited to buying nine grams of tablets per month. Nine grams may not sound like much to the average consumer; however, it is nearly 300 30mg Sudafed tablets. Even a house the size of the Brady Bunch family wouldn't need that much Sudafed during cold season.

The most helpful component to law enforcement is logs of those buying these hard tablets. Local law enforcement won't be looking for Average Joe or Plain Jane buying one package or two of medicine each cold season. Instead, they will be looking for trends representing criminal behavior. The first arrest from this new law came when a person's name appeared buying tablets from numerous pharmacies. Buying large amounts in multiple pharmacies is a solid indication of a meth cook.

This legislation was modeled after an Oklahoma law that is credited with reducing meth production by nearly 80 percent. Neighboring states Iowa and Kansas have enacted similar legislation as well, and the partnership

with Kansas was successful in our first drug bust. While the federal government looks into such legislation Missouri has taken the proactive step in implementing a law that will begin curbing the dangerous drug.

While this new law places the dry tablets behind counters, gel caps and liquid forms of common cold medicines are still available over the counter. Consumers might have to plan ahead when buying dry-tablet forms around pharmacy hours, but the end result of fewer meth labs and meth addicts is well worth a minor inconvenience.

Missouri is the number one state in the nation in terms of meth labs. Think about how astonishing it is that a state with one-fifth of California's population can lead the country in meth. Missouri has taken a stand to reverse this evil trend. Our law-enforcement officials have been asking for this new law, and I am proud the state has given them the tools to be successful. Our communities will be safer as a result - and the results have already begun.

Sen. Cauthorn represents Missouri's 18th Senate District. He can be reached at his capitol office at (573) 751-6858. You can also visit his web page by going to www.senate.mo.gov/cauthorn.