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For Immediate Release:
August 25, 2005

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The Cauthorn Report

Anti-Meth Bill Part II: Consumer Information

JEFFERSON CITY, MO - If you have had a cold lately, one of those summer colds where a cup of piping hot soup on a 90-degree day isn't the remedy you are looking for, you have probably went to purchase cold medicine. If you prefer hard tablet forms of cold pills, those containing pseudoephedrine, you may have noticed they are no longer on the shelves at local grocery and convenience stores. Instead, they are behind the counter of a pharmacy and sold by a pharmacist or pharmacy technician.

Occasionally I am asked why I sponsored legislation placing common cold medicine behind the counter. Well the answer is simple: methamphetamine is a plague destroying our communities. We have to cut off meth cooks at the supply lines if we want to win this battle. That is why I introduced, and the legislature passed, legislation heralded by law enforcement for its practicality and effectiveness in cracking down on meth.

Getting cold medicine for family or individual needs is still pretty simple. However, you may not be able to run into a convenience store for some forms. Dry tablet forms of common medicine like Sudafed and Claritin D are now sold behind the counter at pharmacies, and customers may be asked to show a photo ID and must sign a log when making their purchase indicating how much cold medicine they bought.

The reason for this change is because dry tablets readily lend themselves to being a key ingredient in cooking meth. Liquid caps and syrups are still sold in grocery and convenience stores. These forms of pseudoephedrine are not as readily available to be cooked as meth.

In my last "Cauthorn Corner" I wrote about how the new law is already working. Merely two weeks after the law taking effect the first arrest was made. The logs customers must sign when purchasing solid tablets showed a trend of a shopping spree to stock up on meth ingredients.

This week I am writing to clear the air about what can and cannot be purchased. Sales of solid dosage forms are limited to 9 grams in any 30-day period. These are the products available only in a pharmacy. The following is an example of some popular medicines and how much you can purchase in a 30-day period:

Advil Multi-Symptom Cold
Package: 10 tablets, 30 mg each
Total monthly purchase: 30 packages, 300 total tablets

Tylenol Cold
Package: 24 tablets, 30 mg each
Total monthly purchase: 12 packages, 288 total tablets

Sudafed 12-hour Relief
Package: 10 tablets, 120 mg each
Total monthly purchase: 7 packages, 70 total tablets

Claritin D 24 Hour
Package: 10 tablets, 240 mg each
Total monthly purchase: 3 packages, 30 total tablets

Wal-Profen Cold and Sinus
Package: 20 tablets, 30 mg each
Total monthly purchase: 15 packages, 300 total tablets

As you can see, these amounts are sure to be enough to help with the common cold. Medicine with larger amounts of pseudoephedrine, such as 12 and 24-hour relief pills, mean fewer packets. However, these have less frequent doses as well.

Sales of liquids or liquid filled gel capsules are limited to 9 grams per purchase. These are the products that may be sold in local grocery or convenience stores. Those filling prescriptions for dry tablets, liquids, or the gel caps are exempt from the limits.

Before we know it cold and flu season will be here again. We should all be able to purchase the medicine we need to treat our symptoms with ease. Just remember, when you go to purchase hard tablet forms of common cold medicines they will be sold at a pharmacy. Plan ahead and your purchase should be smooth.

These changes were needed to help our local law enforcement officials track down meth cooks and bust their labs. It also limits access meth cooks have to a key ingredient. We as a state, and we as society, have to fight this epidemic that is plaguing our communities. This new law is the key to winning that fight.

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.