



Tightening the Vise on Meth Production

JEFFERSON CITY — My state lawmaking colleagues and I have progressively clamped down on the manufacture of methamphetamine over the past several years, and the close of this legislative session yielded expanded controls and resources for fighting the illegal use and production of meth — an insidiously addictive drug of widespread reach that lays waste to individuals, harms families and erodes entire communities.

One of the main ingredients in methamphetamine is a compound (ephedrine or the closely linked pseudoephedrine) found in many non-prescription cold sprays, gels and tablets. In 2003, we enacted legislation limiting the number of packages of products containing the compound that could be bought at any given time, and also required that these products be taken off store shelves and placed behind the counters. In 2005, lawmakers limited how much product containing ephedrine or pseudoephedrine could be bought in a 30-day period, and instituted a system to log and track purchases. This year, we've enhanced the value of this log by taking it from a paper form to an electronic database, which will allow for quicker searching access and yield real-time information. Senate Bill 724 also limits the forms of acceptable identification for making these purchases to IDs issued only by the federal or a state government.

While the provisions of SB 724 work to control how meth ingredients are attained, Missouri is also fighting the drug wherever it's being cooked up. House Bill 2022, a supplemental appropriations bill, infused \$1.89 million into MoSMART, a coalition of sheriffs, deputy sheriffs and other law enforcement officials from across the state who work in concert to track down, and shut down meth cooking operations. To this end, 1,285 active and previously occupied meth labs were found and secured in 2007. Thanks to work from Missouri Senator Kit Bond, MoSMART, which was enacted by the Missouri Legislature in 2003, is set to receive federal dollars next year.

A life touched by meth is a life endangered — often, sadly, to the point where life is lost. I'm grateful for the opportunity to be in a position to help thwart the production and use of a drug that serves no purpose other than to destroy.

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 phone at (866) 271-2844.

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