



Lincoln County District Attorney

225 West Olive Street, Room 100, Newport, Oregon 97365
541-265-4145, FAX 541-265-3461, www.co.lincoln.or.us/da/

Rob Bovett
District Attorney

Marcia Buckley
Chief Deputy

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MEDIA RELEASE

For Immediate Release

MISSISSIPPI FOLLOWS OREGON'S LEAD ON METH

Yesterday, February 2, 2010, the State of Mississippi passed legislation to follow Oregon's lead to eliminate the enormous public health and safety threat of methamphetamine labs.

In 2005, the Oregon passed our nation's strongest anti-meth legislation. Among other things, that legislation returned pseudoephedrine, the key ingredient necessary to make meth, to a prescription drug, as it was prior to 1976. Lincoln County District Attorney Rob Bovett, then Assistant County Counsel, was the primary author and proponent of the legislation. Since then, Oregon has nearly eradicated meth labs, reduced drug arrests by 30 percent (all due to meth), and experienced the steepest decline in crime rates in our nation.

Mississippi finished with over 500 meth lab incidents in 2009. Oregon, historically one of our nation's leaders in meth labs, finished 2009 with a total of 10.

In 2007, Mexico, the source of most of the meth in America, followed Oregon's lead. Mexico then went even further and banned pseudoephedrine entirely. As a result, Mexican drug trafficking organizations have been unable to obtain sufficient pseudoephedrine to cook enough meth in Mexico to feed their illicit drug supply chains.

"They have resorted to cooking a weaker version of meth, and backfilling what they can with meth cooked up in California," Bovett said. As a result, the potency of meth from Mexico is weak. "This has been driving a massive resurgence of local meth labs all across our nation, because addicts want more potent meth."

But Oregon is the exception, and its success has not gone unnoticed. The meth epidemic is a worldwide problem, so many states and nations have looked to Oregon as a pioneer in providing solutions. After carefully considering all options, New Zealand adopted the Oregon system of pseudoephedrine control in October of 2009. Then came Mississippi.

"Yesterday, after doing their homework and fighting off an onslaught from the pharmaceutical industry," Bovett said "the Mississippi Legislature followed Oregon's lead." After a heated debate, the Mississippi House of Representatives voted last Thursday 105 to 15 in favor of the Oregon-style legislation. Yesterday, the Mississippi Senate voted 45 to 4 to support the bill.

In a news release issued shortly after yesterday's vote, Mississippi Governor Haley Barbour announced he would sign that legislation: "I commend the Mississippi Legislature for its swift action to address the methamphetamine problem in this state. I look forward to signing House Bill 512, which will make it more difficult to obtain the ingredients for this drug that tears families apart and harms many of our communities. Meth labs threaten public safety, and I don't think there is any doubt we will see a drop in the number of labs in our state."

Because meth knows no borders, further positive progress in Oregon now requires action by more states or by Congress. United States Senator Ron Wyden (D-Ore) recently announced he will be introducing the Meth Lab Elimination Act, which would implement the Oregon solution nationwide.

Bovett is hopeful that, as evidence mounts from more states and nations, Congress will eventually overcome the power and influence of the pharmaceutical industry, return pseudoephedrine to a prescription drug, implement science-based drug control policies, and end this unnecessary epidemic that has devastated lives, families, communities and, most tragically, drug endangered children who are forced to live with the daily reality of their parent's methamphetamine abuse and addiction.

For more information, contact Rob Bovett at rbovett@co.lincoln.or.us or visit www.oregondec.org