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ATTORNEY GENERAL MADIGAN ANNOUNCES BILL TO STRENGTHEN METH LAWS, CRACK DOWN ON REPEAT METH OFFENDERS

Legislation Would Prohibit Repeat Offenders From Buying Meth Ingredients, Help Safeguard Area Communities

Herrin — Attorney General Lisa Madigan today announced new legislation to strengthen state law on production and use of methamphetamine that will impose harsher penalties on repeat meth users and producers. The measure is aimed at the offenders who reenter society after a meth-related conviction only to continue cooking and using the drug in their communities. Madigan will work with Senators Gary Forby and William Haine and Representatives John Bradley and Brandon Phelps on this legislation.

"This legislation targets the repeat offenders who have been freed from prison only to slide back into their old ways, producing a drug that endangers their lives and the lives of their unsuspecting neighbors," Attorney General Madigan said. "Protecting communities from the dangers of meth and its production is a priority for my office."

Madigan was joined by state and local officials today at Herrin City Hall to announce the legislation.

"This is another example of Attorney General Lisa Madigan's commitment to our region and fighting the scourge of meth," said state Rep. John Bradley of Marion.

The Attorney General's proposal takes aim at those convicted of meth-related offenses who too often continue to use and cook meth. Specifically, offenders serving terms of mandatory supervised release or probation or those on bond for meth-related offenses would be:

- Banned from purchasing or possessing any product containing pseudoephedrine, a key meth ingredient, without approval.
- Prohibited from purchasing or possessing any product containing ammonium nitrate, another ingredient in meth production

The bill also mandates the Illinois Department of Corrections (IDOC) issue parole violations if an offender is again charged with a violation of the Meth Control and Community Protection Act or a violation of the Meth Precursor Control Act. It would also require IDOC to provide written notice to the Illinois State Police (ISP), the local state's attorneys' and sheriffs' offices of the release or discharge of any person convicted of a methamphetamine offense.

"The powerful addictive nature of meth must be met by a vigorous law enforcement response," said state Sen. William Haine of Alton. "This is part of Attorney General Madigan's continuing battle and it is absolutely necessary."

Currently, more than 10 percent of those on mandatory supervised release violate meth laws after leaving prison. Law enforcement agencies in central and southern Illinois are increasingly finding more "one-pot" meth cooks, a reference to the meth batches made with legal quantities of pseudoephedrine and with ammonium nitrate obtained from products like cold packs. These labs represent a threat to not only the user but to neighbors and law enforcement, who may be exposed to toxic byproducts or even explosions from the meth-making process.

"I applaud the Attorney General for her persistent fight against this dangerous drug," said state Rep. Brandon Phelps of Harrisburg. "With this law, we can work to prevent meth makers from falling back into their drug-using ways and from harming others."

When Madigan assumed her post in 2003 the use and production of meth was at epidemic levels. Since that time she has led successful efforts to require strict purchasing regulations of products containing pseudoephedrine and created meth-specific offenses that law enforcement agencies across the state have used to arrest and prosecute these offenders.

She initiated the Methamphetamine Control and Community Protection Act, which took effect in September 2005 and created two new offenses: possession of anhydrous ammonia with intent to manufacture meth, and aggravated possession of anhydrous ammonia with intent to manufacture meth. It also increased penalties for possession of anhydrous ammonia in an unauthorized container and tampering with anhydrous ammonia equipment, raising these offenses from Class 4 to Class 3 felonies.

The Methamphetamine Precursor Control Act, also initiated by Madigan, imposed stricter controls on the display and sale of pseudoephedrine. Since the law took effect in January 2006, the number and size of meth labs in Illinois have decreased. This law also resulted in a dramatic reduction in the flow of out-of-state meth-makers coming to Illinois to purchase pseudoephedrine and other meth ingredients.

In 2008, Attorney General Madigan, state Rep. John E. Bradley (D-Marion) and Williamson County Sheriff Tom Cundiff unveiled a pilot project allowing law enforcement officials and pharmacies in Williamson, Franklin, Jackson, Johnson, Saline and Union counties to track pseudoephedrine purchases in a central database to catch meth makers traveling from town to town purchasing needed ingredients for manufacturing. The project was funded with a \$98,000 federal U.S. Department of Justice Community Oriented Policing Services grant. Madigan has since worked to expand the pilot to other counties across the state.

"We have had tremendous success in stamping out meth labs in Illinois, but we must remain vigilant to prevent meth makers and users from finding a home in our state," Madigan said. "This legislation would put meth offenders on special watch to prevent them from further destroying their lives and ensuring a safe environment for all our communities."

The Attorney General plans to propose the new legislation in the General Assembly's upcoming spring session.

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