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BILL ALLOWING PHARMACIES TO BLOCK SALE OF KEY METH INGREDIENT SENT TO GOVERNOR***Attorney General Urges Gov. Quinn to Sign Bill to Extend Program That Allows Pharmacies to Block Illegal Pseudoephedrine Sales***

Springfield – Attorney General Lisa Madigan today applauded the Illinois General Assembly for passing a bill that would help pharmacies and law enforcement crack down on “pill shoppers” buying the key ingredient used to make methamphetamine. Senate Bill 73 was sent to the governor this week for his consideration.

Madigan said the legislation would extend the statewide, electronic program that allows pharmacies to block illegal sales of pseudoephedrine, the key meth ingredient, if the sale would exceed the legal purchase amount. The system has operated since June 2010 and is set to expire in January.

“We must ensure that law enforcement has every tool at its disposal in its fight to keep this drug out of our communities,” Attorney General Madigan said. “This system will help to identify the criminals who are illegally buying and stockpiling cold pills to cook meth.”

Consumers are currently restricted from buying more than two packages of pseudoephedrine products at a time or products with more than 7,500 milligrams of pseudoephedrine in a 30-day period, under the Methamphetamine Precursor Control Act of 2006. The restrictions cut in half the number of meth labs reported, from 761 in 2006 to 362 in 2007.

But Madigan said meth producers have now adapted to these restrictions by using small, legal amounts of pseudoephedrine to mix meth in two-liter bottles, producing limited but still dangerous amounts of the drug.

The statewide tracking system has served as a key tool for law enforcement fighting the rise of this small-scale production, dubbed “one-pot” or “shake ‘n bake” methods. The system allows authorities to target pill shoppers traveling from pharmacy to pharmacy to purchase legal pseudoephedrine amounts and stockpile the ingredient to make meth using this new technique. From June 2010 to the start of October 2011, pharmacies used the system to block the sale of more than 70,000 boxes of pseudoephedrine-based cold medication.

“The effects of meth are devastating, widespread, and way too frequent,” said Rep. Jerry Costello II, the House bill sponsor. “This legislation will create a permanent, statewide PSE tracking system to block bulk sales of PSE and help curb the production of meth in Illinois.”

“As a former state’s attorney, I’ve witnessed firsthand how meth dealers are causing damage to individuals, families and the society as a whole. We need to continue to pass laws that help us crack down on these criminals who are corrupting our communities,” said Sen. William Haine, Senate sponsor. “This legislation will give law enforcement the tools they need to put criminals who manufacture and deal methamphetamine out of business.”

As Attorney General, Madigan has worked to combat the scourge of meth use and production in Illinois, passing tough laws, including the 2006 Precursor Control Act, to crack down on the sale of pseudoephedrine and strengthening penalties for those convicted of meth-related offenses.

