



INDIANA PROSECUTING ATTORNEYS COUNCIL

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Prosecutors Ask for Tools to Fight Meth Labs and Their Collateral Damage

Indiana prosecuting attorneys today asked members of the Indiana General Assembly to consider the human and taxpayer tolls created by highly volatile meth labs as the House Public Health Committee heard three bills directed at reducing the state's number one national ranking in meth labs.

Delaware County Prosecutor Jeff Arnold said his county leads the state, and therefore the nation, in meth labs. "I had a zero-tolerance policy toward meth arrests," he said. "In 2012, we had 62 meth labs but in 2015, we had 238 meth labs busted. The zero tolerance effort doesn't work." He recounted the collateral damage to children in the presence of meth making, law enforcement and first responders who must investigate and collect evidence, as well as the financial toll to property owners with severely contaminated structures and to communities left with the blight.

"You're our only hope," he told legislators. "I'll take anything I can get to win this fight."

Martin County Prosecutor Michael Steiner said the statistic of 1,515 meth labs reported in the state of Indiana does not represent the actual incidents of meth making. The number is simply the instances in which at least one meth lab was discovered by law enforcement. Usually at a meth making scene is evidence of multiple times meth has been manufactured. Coupled with undiscovered meth labs, he estimated the actual number of instances of meth making in Indiana each year is in the tens of thousands.

"I understand the majority of the public opposes making pseudoephedrine available by prescription only but an elected official occasionally must make an unpopular decision in order to lead; we must lead regardless of the consequences," he said. "I know as a leader where I stand."

The prosecutors thanked committee chairman Cindy Kirchhofer and Reps. Ben Smaltz, Wendy McNamara and David Frizzell for their efforts to find solutions to the dangers of highly volatile meth labs. As Rep. Smaltz told the committee, "We're not going to stop meth addiction. Meth is a global problem. We're trying to stop meth labs."

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About the Indiana Prosecuting Attorneys Council: *The IPAC is a non-partisan, independent state judicial branch agency that supports Indiana's 91 prosecuting attorneys and their chief deputies. It is governed by a 10-member board of directors of elected prosecuting attorneys. The IPAC assists prosecuting attorneys in the preparation of manuals, legal research and training seminars. It serves as a liaison to local, state, and federal agencies, study commissions, and community groups in an effort to support law enforcement and promote the fair administration of justice.*

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