



MISSISSIPPI BUREAU OF NARCOTICS



In 2005, Mississippi passed several new laws designed to curb the growth in production and use of crystal methamphetamine (meth) in Mississippi. [1] Unfortunately, it did not work. After an initial drop, violators easily adapted by purchasing the legal allowable amount of products at one retail outlet and following up with successive purchases at other stores using multiple buyers with multiple forms of identification.

By 2009, the Mississippi Bureau of Narcotics (MBN) recorded the following:

- Highest ever recorded number of meth labs in the state: Over 713 meth labs and 129 Drug Endangered Children in Mississippi. [2] (DEC)
- Meth-related arrests exceeded the combined total of both powder and crack cocaine arrests for the first time in Mississippi drug law enforcement history. Of approximately 3,000 drug arrests for 2009, nearly one-third were meth related.
- MBN's budget was either level funded or reduced for the 7th time in 7 years.

Obviously the 2005 laws were not working. Together with many interested groups, [3] MBN asked the question: "How will the State of Mississippi battle the growing meth problem with declining revenues?"

In answering that question, MBN considered electronic tracking logs (e-logs) and determined all e-logs have two major flaws. The first is that logs required concentrated, costly law enforcement resources to set up in real time, to monitor and investigate leads, and to take down meth production schemes. And because violators know how to adapt to e-logs, the second flaw is that e-logs have not significantly impacted ancillary costs to clean up sites, societal costs for endangered children, mental health services for meth users, cost of prosecution, and cost of incarceration. During lean budget years, it is unrealistic to expect an increase in law enforcement resources for this dedicated purpose. And besides, why track a problem when you know how to stop it?

The simple truth is the only way to stop meth labs is to hinder access to the main precursor PSE/EPH, without which meth cannot be manufactured. Prescription only for PSE/EPH was the only legitimate choice.

Recent Mississippi meth numbers tell the success story. Since July 1, 2010 MBN has recorded the following:

- Meth-related arrests are down approximately 62%.
- 203 meth labs have been reported, 67% reduction.
- 24 Drug-Endangered Children have been removed, 83% reduction.
- Meth activity in surrounding states has increased as violators move to "electronic tracking" states to find PSE/EPH.

The supporters of prescription only legislation wanted to do the right thing: adequately support law enforcement, protect children, and preserve public safety. I believe at the end of the day prescription only legislation was not only the right choice to achieve these goals, but it was also the only legitimate choice.

[1] In 2005 the Mississippi Legislature passed House Bill 607 which restricted access to PSE/EPH by limiting the amount one can purchase or possess and Senate Bill 2235 which makes possession of precursors evidence of intent to produce meth.

[2] 2005 – 237 Labs and 39 DEC, 2006 – 275 Labs and 46 DEC, 2007 – 159 Labs and 46 DEC, 2008 - 300 Labs and 66 DEC (DEC-drug endangered children)

[3] House Bill 512 was historic legislation designed to address a pressing public safety and public health issue in Mississippi-the production and use of crystal methamphetamine. MBN received support from Governor Haley Barbour, Lt Governor Phil Bryant, Leadership in the Mississippi State Senate and the Mississippi House of Representatives, MS Department of Human Services, Child Advocacy Centers, Judges, MS Prosecutors Association, Mississippi Chiefs of Police, Mississippi Sheriffs Association, the Mississippi Independent Pharmacy Association, the Mississippi State Medical Association, and many others. MBN wants to thank each for their contribution to the successful passage of HB 512.