



## MEMORANDUM

TO: Governor's Alcohol and Drug Policy Commission

FROM: Rob Bovett, Chair, Oregon Meth Task Force 

DATE: October 2, 2009

SUBJECT: Oregon drug control policy accomplishments, challenges, and lessons

In December of 2003, Oregon Governor Ted Kulongoski announced the formation of the Meth Task Force for the purpose of proposing and implementing strategies to address the epidemic of methamphetamine abuse and addiction that was tearing apart families, neighborhoods, and communities throughout Oregon. The Task Force, consisting of a wide range of prevention, enforcement, and treatment professionals, began its work in 2004.

After five years, the Oregon Meth Task Force has now concluded its challenging work toward remedying the meth epidemic and furthering science-based drug control policy in the State of Oregon.

At its final three-hour meeting on September 4, 2009, the Task Force spent its first hour reviewing some of its accomplishments, the second hour reviewing a few of the challenges that lie ahead, and our final hour hearing from Oregon Attorney General John Kroger regarding the upcoming work of your new Commission.

At the suggestion of the Task Force and General Kroger, I have prepared this memo, with assistance from Task Force members. The purpose is to briefly review accomplishments, challenges, and lessons learned, in hope they will be of some benefit to the Commission as it embarks on its new and exciting journey.

In a sense, this memo is the passing of the torch from the Task Force to the Commission, although we are fully aware that there are many torches being handed off to the Commission from various task forces and councils. We are excited and optimistic about the new Commission's membership and charge. Our members stand ready to assist the Commission in any of its future endeavors.

## A. ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Not listed in any order of significance or importance:

### 2004 to 2009:

- Teamwork and collaboration:
  - We started as a group of prevention, enforcement, and treatment professionals working in our own silos. We quickly broke down those silos and found that we dramatically multiplied our power and effectiveness. We have built relationships among and between us that will last a lifetime.
- Prevention and public awareness campaign:
  - We utilized public involvement, the media, and community coalitions to mobilize and coordinate efforts to move public policy. This is the key that drove all of our other accomplishments.
- Action:
  - The Task Force generated recommendations and reports, but we also worked hard to implement those recommendations. These reports were instrumental in creating a record of what we had already presented to the legislature and still needed to work on. In short, we were an action team.

### 2005 Legislature

- HB 2485: Among other things:
  - Declared exactly what needs to be done.
  - Provided for abatement of meth houses.
  - Effectively controlled pseudo/ephedrine (PSE), the key ingredient necessary to make meth, by returning PSE to a prescription drug, in order to eliminate “smurfing” and virtually eliminate meth labs in Oregon. This has recently become a national model, in light of the massive resurgence of smurfing and meth labs throughout the rest of our nation.
  - Expanded drug courts throughout Oregon by way of Criminal Justice Commission grants. Drug courts are one of the most powerful evidence-based tools to reduce crime and save lives and families ravaged by addiction.
- SB 907: Among other things:
  - Provided for intervention and services for drug endangered children, the most tragic victims of the meth epidemic.
  - Broke out the big five drugs of abuse and separated them from the schedules of controlled substances, for effective tracking and to enable responsive polices based on more than just medical utility and potential for abuse (e.g., also take into account personal, family, and social harm).

NOTE: HB 2485 and SB 907 comprised the “2005 Oregon Anti-Meth Package,” which is, to this day, the most effective and powerful anti-meth legislation in the nation.

## 2007 Legislature

- Budget
  - Secured funding for Intensive Treatment and Recovery Services (ITRS) for addicted families. Over 2,700 parents accessed the evidence-based ITRS during the 2007-2009 biennium, 571 parents successfully completed treatment, and 484 parents met family reunification requirements.
  - Secured funding for the Strengthening Families Program to provide evidence-based support and training for at-risk families to reduce drug use, addiction, and crime. The program results in significant decreases in substance abuse and significant increases in family harmony and involvement.
  - Secured continuing funding for Oregon's drug courts for the 2007-2009 biennium.
- HB 2348:
  - Repealed the antiquated UPPL, which distorted emergency room coding of illness and injury away from substance abuse, and unfairly discriminated and stigmatized addiction.
- HB 2309:
  - Provided alternative bonding for meth lab cleanup.

## 2009 Legislature

- Budget
  - Secured continuing funding for Intensive Treatment and Recovery Services (ITRS) for addicted families for the 2009-2011 biennium.
  - Secured continuing funding for Oregon's drug courts for the 2009-2011 biennium.
- SB 355:
  - Enacted a long overdue Prescription Monitoring Program to provide doctors and pharmacists with an effective tool to help prevent prescription drug abuse through doctor shopping, and increase the appropriate prescribing of pain management medication by reducing physician fear of doctor shopping.
- SB 356 (and HB 3457 from 2005 and Measure 53 from 2008):
  - Reformed and restored Oregon's forfeiture laws to ensure that innocent owners are protected and that convicted drug dealers are not able to keep their ill gotten gains.
- SB 570
  - Comprehensive metals theft prevention using the State of Washington metals theft law as a model, but improving upon that model by filling in the gaps identified by our Washington colleagues.

## **Federal and International**

Because meth knows no borders, individual Task Force members also worked hard to implement effective strategies to control meth on national and international levels:

- 2005 SM 3:
  - Asked Congress to effectively control PSE.
- 2005:
  - Helped craft the Combat Methamphetamine Act and the Methamphetamine Epidemic Elimination Act, which would later be merged, after being watered down, into the enacted Combat Methamphetamine Epidemic Act. The unfortunate watering down is the current cause of the meth lab resurgence all across our nation (except Oregon, of course).
- 2009:
  - Helping to promote the draft Meth Lab Elimination Act, sponsored by US Senator Ron Wyden, which would implement the Oregon model on a national level (returning PSE to prescription only).
- Mexico:
  - Worked with Mexico's Attorney General and their drug regulatory agency (COFEPRIS) to effectively control PSE. Mexico followed Oregon's lead by making PSE a prescription drug, and then banned PSE entirely. Five other nations have followed Mexico's lead. The effects were reduced meth purity and increased meth price.

## **B. SOME CHALLENGES**

The Task Force recognizes that there are many challenges ahead, as well as opportunities, in the area of drug control policy and strategy. We will not attempt to list all of those issues. However, the Task Force did feel that we would be remiss if we did not point out a few specific items for which the Task Force has been the champion, and for which we feel the Commission should now take a leading role to ensure that progress made is not lost in the shuffle:

- Drug Courts:
  - Through years of efforts working with legislators, we have expanded drug court programs throughout Oregon. Drug Courts not only provide evidence-based accountability and treatment, they save lives and families. Furthermore, drug courts bring treatment and justice professionals together in collaborative teams, which have tremendous secondary benefits in the community. Especially in light of turn-over in the legislature, it is vital that the Commission continue to champion Oregon legislative support for our drug courts, as well as other problem-solving courts.

- **Bad Trends: Prescription Drug Abuse, Underage Drinking, and Heroin:**
  - The Task Force is particularly concerned with continuing trends indicating increasing high levels of underage drinking, as well as increasing abuse and addiction to prescription drugs and heroin, especially among our youth and young adults. There is much work to be done in the areas of public awareness, prevention, enforcement, and treatment. Oregon now has a golden opportunity to get ahead of, and reverse, these unfortunate trends, and we strongly encourage the Commission to focus its valuable energy and resources toward this important and critical endeavor.
- **Meth:**
  - While it is true that we have nearly eradicated meth labs and driven meth abuse down dramatically in Oregon (in stark contrast to the rest of the nation), there can be no doubt that meth remains, by far, Oregon's number one illicit drug abuse problem. It is vitally important that the Commission work to protect progress made, and further the cause in the effort to stem the tide of the personal, family, and social destruction caused by methamphetamine abuse and addiction.

### **C. A FEW LESSONS LEARNED**

Some of the lessons learned flow directly from the accomplishments, experiences, and challenges listed above. Here are a few to highlight:

- **Teamwork and collaboration:**
  - To some extent, the Task Force initially had to struggle through preconceived notions, primarily driven by experience operating within a single professional silo. Once these barriers were broken and Task Force members began listening to, and learning from, each other, strategies and plans evolved with new and exciting power and effectiveness.
- **Task Force Operations:**
  - The Task Force broke into subcommittees that focused on specific issues (Law Enforcement, Treatment, Community Involvement, Drug Endangered Children, Precursors, Oregon Trail Card), which closed down as their work was completed. Each subcommittee developed recommendations which were then presented to the entire Task Force for discussion and approval. Often the recommendations were sent back to the subcommittee for more work, and some recommendations were not approved.
  - A key to the breaking of barriers was that the first Chair of the Task Force (Walt Myers) made sure to remain neutral while proposals were made, in order to ensure open communications and facilitate the effective operation of the Task Force. Each subsequent Chair maintained that approach.
- **Comprehensive strategies:**
  - The Task Force realized quite early that many of its strategies needed to look at the broader issues of addiction, and could not focus exclusively on meth. This

invariably led us into areas that were not technically our charge, but needed to be addressed. We are pleased to see that the new Commission's charge is broad, and we encourage the Commission to be surgical when surgery is called for, and global when a broad strategy is needed.

- Don't give up:
  - Some of the Task Force recommendations required many years and multiple legislative sessions to accomplish and implement. At times, incremental gains toward ultimate goals should be viewed as progress. At other times, bold action is not only called for, but attainable. Don't be afraid to gladly accept small progress when that is the best that can be accomplished, and strive and fight for bold action when that is what is necessary.

As stated above, we are very optimistic that your new Commission will accomplish great things for the State of Oregon, and very much look forward to learning of the Commission's work for the benefit of all of Oregon's citizens.

Finally, we wish to extend special thanks to:

(1) Governor Ted Kulongoski for the vision to form the Task Force, entrust us with a vitally important mission, and support and encourage our efforts to develop and implement numerous highly successful strategies.

(2) Senator Ginny Burdick, former Senator Roger Beyer, Representative Wayne Kreiger, and former Representative Greg Macpherson, better known collectively as the 2005 Oregon Meth Caucus, who had the wisdom and determination to take bold action to help lead Oregon toward solutions.

(3) The director and staff of the Oregon Criminal Justice Commission, and the Governor's Senior Policy Advisors, who provided incredibly high quality and effective support for the work of the Task Force. Without their aid and assistance, none of the Task Force accomplishments would have been possible.

pc/ec: The 2005 Oregon Meth Caucus:

Senator Ginny Burdick  
Former Senator Roger Beyer  
Representative Wayne Kreiger  
Former Representative Greg Macpherson

Meth Task Force former Chairs:

Walt Myers, Salem Police Chief (Ret)  
Darryl Larsen, Lane County Circuit Court Judge (Ret)  
Anna Peterson, cofounder, No Meth Not In My Neighborhood Task Force

Meth Task Force Steering Committee members

Meth Task Force members

Joe O'Leary, Senior Policy Advisor, Governor Ted Kulongoski  
Craig Campbell, former Senior Policy Advisor, Governor Ted Kulongoski  
Craig Prins, Director, Oregon Criminal Justice Commission  
Mike Stafford, Staff, Oregon Criminal Justice Commission and Meth Task Force  
Devarshi Bajpai, Staff, Oregon Criminal Justice Commission and Meth Task Force  
Bill Taylor, Counsel, Judiciary Committees, Oregon Legislature  
Annola Dejong, Staff, Judiciary Committees, Oregon Legislature