



October 14, 2005

Written Testimony
of Rob Bovett, ONEA Legal Counsel and OADEC President, before the
United States House Committee on Government Reform
Subcommittee on Criminal Justice, Drug Policy and Human Resources

Dear Chair Souder, Congressman Greg Walden, and Members of the Subcommittee,

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to present you with a few brief thoughts for your hearing entitled "Stopping the Methamphetamine Epidemic: Lessons from the Pacific Northwest." Here in Oregon, we have enjoyed strong bi-partisan leadership in the battle against meth, both at a state level, and in our entire Congressional delegation.

As I am sure you are all quite aware, any solution to our meth epidemic will require strong action in three areas: Prevention, Enforcement, and Treatment (the so-called three-legged stool or "PET Project"). There is much to be done, and many things can be learned from our failures and our successes here in the Northwest. I would like to focus on just one piece of the big puzzle: Pseudoephedrine.

As you know, meth is different from many other drugs of abuse. First, meth use creates more collateral damage - on addicts, families, neighborhoods, communities and, most tragically, children. Second, it doesn't occur in nature. You can't grow meth. It must be "cooked" up in a meth lab with pseudoephedrine, an ingredient used in some cold medicines. This means meth is almost uniquely susceptible to supply-side intervention.

The U.S. Senate recently passed the Combat Meth Act. The Senate plan would nationalize the pseudoephedrine control rule adopted last year in Oklahoma and Oregon. That rule has proven to be the only effective method of significantly reducing local toxic home meth labs, which pollute neighborhoods and poison drug endangered children. The Senate plan, however, lacks any effective control of the international pseudoephedrine feeding the "super" meth labs in Mexico. Those super labs make most of the meth that is on our streets today.

In response, you have recently introduced the Meth Epidemic Elimination Act. Unlike the Senate plan, the House plan has provisions to cut off U.S. foreign aid to countries that fail to address the illegal diversion of pseudoephedrine to the super labs. I think it could be made even more effective if you added economic sanctions as well (we need both a carrot and a stick). I also think we would be well-served by better securing our borders - not just for meth, but for basic national security in a very insecure world.

Rob Bovett
ONEA Legal Counsel
225 W Olive Street, Room 110
Newport, OR 97365
(541) 265-4108
(541) 265-4176 (fax)
rbovett@co.lincoln.or.us



ONEA
PO Box 17173
Salem, OR 97305
(503) 581-4168
(503) 366-3685 (fax)
www.onea.org

I was in Washington DC all last week. The hot debate appears to be whether to go with the Senate plan to control domestic meth labs, or the House plan to control international meth labs. This is not rocket science. The simple answer is this: **We need both.** The Senate plan alone would fail to address the bigger meth supply issue. The House plan alone would be a possible recipe for disaster by driving up the incidence of home meth labs to make up for the loss of meth supply.

Adopting the Senate plan will require strong leadership in the face of opposition by some of the pharmaceutical industry. Oregon Governor Ted Kulongoski said it bluntly: "The pharmaceutical companies can make this stuff without pseudoephedrine. I think the federal government has to tell the pharmaceutical companies 'stop this.'" Instead, the Administration has proposed weak legislation and "voluntary industry-led programs."

Adopting the House plan will require strong international leadership. I hope you will enact this powerful bill, and I hope the Administration will use its power, rather than continue working without a carrot or a stick.

If you haven't yet read the *The Oregonian* series "Unnecessary Epidemic" and its follow-up stories, I strongly encourage you to do so. The stories and facts are both shocking and compelling. Please do whatever you can to ensure the passage of both the Combat Meth Act and the Meth Epidemic Elimination Act, so the East Coast can avoid the devastation of a full-blown meth epidemic, and we can get some relief out here in the West.

Sincerely,

Rob Bovett

Legal Counsel, Oregon Narcotics Enforcement Association (ONEA)
President, Oregon Alliance for Drug Endangered Children (OADEC)
Chair, Drug Endangered Children (DEC) Subcommittee, Governor's Meth Task Force



www.onea.org



OREGON ALLIANCE
FOR DRUG ENDANGERED CHILDREN

www.oregondec.org