

CHPA National Meth Watch Launch

National Press Club

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Remarks by

CHPA President Linda A. Suydam*

Welcome and thank you for joining us today to launch Meth Watch – an innovative and effective partnership which will bring communities together to fight against methamphetamine production.

I am very pleased to have with us today the co-chairs of the Congressional Meth Caucus, Representative Rick Larsen from Washington and Representative Chris Cannon from Utah, and Craig Fuller, president and CEO of the National Association of Chain Drug Stores. I appreciate their attendance and support for this project. They have all been tremendous leaders and partners in the fight against meth, and each will tell you in his own words why this program is so important.

As many of you know, methamphetamine abuse is spreading rapidly across the country. Once primarily a West Coast threat, as Representative Larsen can attest, meth has made its way across state lines and has spread throughout the country – from coast to coast and even to Alaska and Hawaii.

This is a very complex drug issue. Most of the meth consumed in this country comes from large labs in California and Mexico, and is distributed throughout the country by traditional drug trafficking cartels. However, a smaller amount of meth is produced by so-called “cooks” who are producing meth out of small, makeshift toxic labs in their homes, cars, motel rooms, and even in our state and national parks.

Recently, we’ve seen an increase in these small toxic labs that turn legitimate, household products into illegal, addictive drugs. How do they do this? With recipes swarming the Internet, anyone can find a meth recipe these days using ingredients available in most retail outlets. Products like over-the-counter cold medicines, rubbing alcohol, iodine, batteries, drain cleaner, rock salt, and acetone are just a few of the ingredients used to make meth.

And while these “meth cooks” make only a small amount of meth, often just for their own consumption, their production methods are toxic, explosive, and devastating to communities across the country – requiring hazardous waste cleanup, threatening the health of children living in homes where meth is cooked, and endangering the safety of neighbors unlucky enough to live near such a lab.

*This text is the basis of the oral presentation. It should be used with the understanding that some material may have been added or omitted during presentation.

Meth Watch was first developed in Kansas by the Kansas Department of Health and Environment, the Kansas Bureau of Investigation, the Kansas Methamphetamine Prevention Project, and Kansas retailers. Participating retailers experienced a significant drop in theft of meth precursor products. They provided information to law enforcement that resulted in a number of meth lab busts. They created awareness in communities that got others involved. As success of this program spread, several states began to adopt the Kansas model, including Washington State. Many more have expressed interest, but have been deterred by a lack of resources and know-how.

I'd like to recognize Cristi Cain, who is with us today. Cristi is the real mastermind of this program. She is coordinator of the Kansas Methamphetamine Prevention Project and she has been an enormous resource to us and many other states across the country in the fight against meth.

The Consumer Healthcare Products Association, or CHPA, along with our members and our partners in the retail industry are stepping up to help. In partnership with Kansas, CHPA has developed a national Meth Watch program in order to provide states with the resources and know-how to implement Meth Watch. In communities that have been invaded by meth, almost everyone is affected. Our Meth Watch program will give retailers and community members tools to help law enforcement curb the manufacture of meth in these small toxic labs.

In developing Meth Watch, we knew it had to be simple, replicable, and effective. We've done just that and are pleased to officially announce the launch of this community-building and potentially life-saving program.

Meth Watch is simple. Participating retailers commit to take steps to decrease the likelihood of the theft of cold medicines and other meth precursor products and to prevent meth cooks or their friends from purchasing large quantities of these for illegal use. Retailers notify police immediately when suspicious individuals attempt to purchase these products. Prominent signage throughout participating stores tells would-be meth cooks that they are being watched. The Meth Watch signage also tells ordinary customers that the store is participating in an important effort to stop local production of methamphetamine.

CHPA will be providing a one-stop shop to help interested states implement Meth Watch in their communities. We have developed a uniform Meth Watch model that is available at the MethWatch.com web site. We will be making available a total of one million dollars in seed money to help states get their local programs started. We have created a training video, which I'll show you in a moment, that all retailers can use to train their employees in how to participate. We have developed all the materials needed to implement Meth Watch.

And on July 8 and 9, we will train state leaders on how to implement the program. Twelve states have registered to attend the July training and several others are interested. Current states include Iowa, Illinois, North Carolina, Tennessee, Alabama, Michigan,

Georgia, Minnesota, Utah, Arizona, South Carolina, and Virginia. Several states, in addition to Kansas and Washington, are implementing Meth Watch, including Tennessee, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Oregon. And Virginia Attorney General Jerry Kilgore just last week announced the launch of Meth Watch in his state.

There are many benefits to a national program that creates uniformity among states and among retailers. Part of the Kansas success has been the universal recognition of the distinctive signage, uniform training materials for employees, and reporting forms that have enhanced coordination with law enforcement. Expanding this to other states will make it easy for retailers to comply, especially the national or regional chains, because it will be the same, simple program in every state and in every store. And a national program will help law enforcement coordinate more effectively and share best practices with their partners across the country. Most importantly, meth cooks who are crossing state lines to buy or steal their supplies will meet the same obstacles at every corner.

I thank CHPA member companies who have made this program possible through their generous contributions and support: BASF, Bayer, Bristol-Myers Squibb, GlaxoSmithKline, McNeil, Leiner, Novartis, Perrigo, Pfizer, Procter & Gamble, Schering-Plough, and Wyeth. I also thank Craig Fuller, the NACDS Foundation, and the entire retail community for their financial support and leadership on this issue. Without them this program would not be possible. And with them, we will accomplish great things.

We are honored to have with us today two of the most prominent Congressional leaders in the war on methamphetamine. Congressman Chris Cannon from Mapleton, Utah, was first elected to the House of Representatives in 1996. He is a co-chair of the Congressional Caucus to Fight and Control Methamphetamine and is chairman of the Western Caucus. He serves on the Judiciary, Government Reform, and Resources Committees.

Congressman Rick Larsen from Lake Stevens, Washington, is also a co-chair of the Congressional Meth Caucus and began his congressional service in 2001. He serves on the House Committees on Agriculture, Armed Services, and Transportation and Infrastructure. Both have worked tirelessly to provide law enforcement with the tools they need to fight meth production, to educate their congressional colleagues on the dangers of meth, and to promote public and private sector partnerships to eradicate this terrible drug problem.

In addition to our leaders on the Hill, we are honored to have with us Craig Fuller, another great leader, who is the president and CEO of the National Association of Chain Drug Stores. Prior to joining NACDS, Craig served for eight years in the White House as assistant to President Reagan for cabinet affairs, and as chief of staff to Vice President George H.W. Bush. In addition to his public service, Craig has served as a leader in many organizations of the private sector, as well. Craig, through his leadership at NACDS and in the retail community at large, has been both a leading advocate and financial supporter of Meth Watch.