

One Wisconsin Now: GOP Ohio attorney general seeks to hold opioid makers accountable for addiction crisis, Wisconsin AG Brad Schimel does nothing

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MADISON, Wis. — The Republican Attorney General of Ohio, Mike DeWine, announced he is suing five manufacturers of prescription opioids, seeking to hold them responsible for their role in the state's rising level of opioid addiction. Meanwhile in Wisconsin, Attorney General Brad Schimel, by his inaction, is standing by his position to shield manufacturers of highly addictive prescription drugs responsible for rising levels of abuse in Wisconsin.

“You have to wonder what's up with Brad Schimel when even fellow Republicans are going to court to hold opioid manufacturers accountable for their misleading marketing tactics that have contributed to the opioid addiction crisis,” commented One Wisconsin Now Executive Director Scot Ross.

Despite proclaiming that combating opioid addiction would be a top priority if elected during his 2014 campaign, in office Schimel has taken no legal action to crack down on the tactics of the producers of prescription opioids. In a [2016 newspaper story](#) in which the issue of legal action against opioid manufacturers was raised, Schimel demurred, claiming pharmaceutical manufacturer's unsavory

marketing practices were too far in the past.

But according to the court filing by the Ohio Attorney General:

“ ... by the late 1990s, and continuing today, each Defendant began a marketing scheme designed to persuade doctors and patients that opioids can and should be used for chronic pain, a far broader group of patients much more likely to become addicted and suffer other adverse effects from the long-term use of opioids. In connection with this scheme, Defendant spent, and continues to spend, millions of dollars on promotional activities and materials that falsely deny or trivialize the risks of opioids while overstating the benefits of using them for chronic pain.”

According to online campaign finance records maintained by the Wisconsin Elections Commission, Schimel is the recipient of the only contribution ever given by Purdue Pharmaceutical’s Political Action Committee to a state candidate or state office holder.

During his 2014 campaign it was brought to light that, as Waukesha County District Attorney, Schimel refused a request from One Wisconsin Now to investigate a fellow Republican who authored legislation to slash the child support payments of a wealthy Republican campaign contributor. [In an email response](#) Schimel wrote, “Why can’t a legislator press for legislation that benefits a person who has contributed to their campaign? Isn’t that the essence of representative government?” He continued, “Once the individual is convinced that the particular official will act a certain way, why can’t that citizen make otherwise legal campaign contributions?”

Schimel was also notably absent from a recent effort by Attorneys General in 21 states to oppose Donald Trump and his Education Secretary Betsy DeVos’s scheme to repeal consumer protections for student loan borrowers. In a letter to DeVos, the state top cops note how multiple investigations have revealed abuses in the servicing of student loans and how shoddy practices harm borrowers.

Ross concluded, “It looks like you can add holding accountable the manufacturers of the drugs fueling unprecedented levels of opioid addiction in Wisconsin to the list of things that are not a priority for Brad Schimel.”