

# Dane County Exec. Parisi: Fights to hold pharmaceutical manufacturers and distributors responsible for creating opioid epidemic

Posted on Thursday, Jun 14, 2018

>> **WisPolitics is now on the State Affairs network. Get custom keyword notifications, bill tracking and all WisPolitics content. [Get the app or access via desktop.](#)**

Stephanie Wilson Miller  
Communications Director, Dane County  
608.267.8823 o  
920.470.4618 c

*Consortium of national law firms to lead litigation against drug companies, alleging costs of treatment for addiction, education and law enforcement connected to pervasive opioid abuse*

Today, Dane County Executive Joe Parisi announced that the County has filed suit against the nation's largest pharmaceutical manufacturers and distributors for their role in creating a widespread diversion of prescription opiates for nonmedical purposes. The case was filed on June 14, 2018 in federal district court in the Western District of Wisconsin Case No. 18-cv-455.

Dane County has struggled to manage a rising number of drug overdose cases, including a staggering number of overdose deaths. In 2000, there were 13 opioid-involved overdose deaths in the county, but by 2016, the number of opioid-overdose deaths reached 85. Additionally, in 2015, Dane County had 443 ambulance runs in which naloxone was administered to overdose patients, the second highest amount in the state of Wisconsin.

The rise in overdose cases aligns with the dramatic uptick in opioids dispensed

throughout the county. According to the state's Prescription Drug Monitoring Program, more than 300,000 opioid prescriptions have been dispensed for Dane County residents each year since 2013, even though the County's is only home to approximately 500,000 residents.

"The opioid epidemic has taken a tremendous toll on our community - lives have been lost, families have been hurt, and Dane County taxpayers have shouldered the tremendous cost of trying to manage this growing crisis," said Parisi. "We need more resources to help our friends and neighbors who are addicted to these dangerous drugs and help prevent more innocent people from Dane County from falling through the cracks. Today's action demands accountability from the corporations that have fueled this vicious cycle of widespread addiction in our County."

In the suit, Dane County alleges that many of the nation's largest drug manufacturers pushed highly addictive, dangerous opioids, and deliberately misinformed doctors by claiming that patients using the drugs rarely experienced addiction. The companies named in the suit include: Purdue Pharma; Teva Ltd. (which acquired pharmaceutical maker Cephalon, Inc. in 2011); Janssen Pharmaceuticals, Inc. (a wholly-owned subsidiary of Johnson & Johnson); Endo Health Solutions, Inc.; Allergan PLC; Mallinckrodt; and Insys Therapeutics, Inc. Drugs manufactured by these companies include, but are not limited to: OxyContin, Actiq, Fentora, Duragesic, Nucynta, Nucynta ER, Opana/Opana ER, Percodan, Percocet, Zydone, Kadian and Norco.

The suit also alleges that three of the nation's largest drug distributors - Cardinal Health, AmerisourceBergen, and McKesson Corp. - failed to monitor, identify and report suspicious activity in the size and frequency of opioid shipments to pharmacies, in violation of the federal Controlled Substances Act. Additionally, the suit names three of the nation's largest Retail Pharmacies - CVS, Walgreens and Walmart - for their role in failing to report suspicious opioid orders.

Dane County has hired a team of expert law firms, experienced in holding the powerful pharmaceutical industry accountable. Those firms include Baron & Budd; Levin, Papantonio, Thomas, Mitchell, Rafferty & Proctor; Greene Ketchum Bailey Farrell & Tweel; Hill, Peterson, Carper, Bee & Deitzler; McHugh Fuller Law; Powell & Majestro, PLLC; and Axley Brynerson, LLP. The firms currently represent more than 500 cities and counties throughout the United States and serve as lead counsel to approximately 80 percent of the municipalities that have filed suit against

pharmaceutical manufacturers and distributors for opioid-related claims.

“The opioid epidemic in Dane County, and throughout the country, did not happen by accident,” said Baron & Budd Shareholder, Burton LeBlanc. “These Fortune 500 corporations were motivated by greed and acted with total disregard for the dangerous consequences of dumping these drugs throughout the country. Our team is determined to fight vigorously to hold these corporations accountable and help Dane County put a stop to this crisis.”