

One Wisconsin Now: Brad Schimel and Scott Walker repeat mistakes past; refuse to take legal action against opioid manufacturers

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New York Times Reports Federal Prosecutors Regret Letting Manufacturer Execs Off the Hook in 2007, Declare it Was a Lost Opportunity to Slow Addiction Crisis

MADISON, Wis. — A [New York Times story](#) reveals principals at Purdue Pharma, the manufacturer of opioid painkiller oxycontin, knew about the dangers of abuse of their drug as early as 1996 and covered it up. The report also features federal officials expressing regret about how failing to aggressively prosecute pharmaceutical executives, "... meant that a critical chance to slow the trajectory of the opioid epidemic was lost." In Wisconsin, Gov. Scott Walker has not authorized the state Department of Justice to pursue legal action against the manufacturers behind the opioid crisis and Attorney General Brad Schimel has publicly commented he is opposed to filing a lawsuit, as have Attorneys General in other states.

"The evidence shows the manufacturers of prescription opioids knew that the product making them unbelievably wealthy was dangerously addictive, and they covered it up," commented One Wisconsin Now Executive Director Scot Ross. "By refusing to take legal action to hold accountable the people responsible for unleashing a preventable crisis of opioid addiction, Scott Walker and Brad Schimel

are part of the problem.”

Ross noted that Gov. Walker took a \$10,000 campaign contribution from the late founder of Purdue Pharma, Mortimer Sackler. In addition, the Republicans Governors Association (RGA), which has among its top contributors big pharma, has pumped over \$10 million into Scott Walker’s three previous campaigns for governor and has already booked \$5 million more in television ads for him this fall.

Schimmel proclaimed in 2014 that combating opioid addiction would be a top priority if elected. But in a 2016 newspaper story in which the issue of legal action against opioid manufacturers was raised, Schimmel demurred, claiming pharmaceutical manufacturer’s unsavory marketing practices were too far in the past. He made those comments a month after receiving a contribution from Purdue Pharma PAC, its only PAC contribution made in Wisconsin.

As Attorney General, Schimmel has also been the beneficiary of Republican Attorneys General Association (RAGA) paid attack ads against his announced Democratic opponent in 2017. According to the most recent filing with the Internal Revenue Service, RAGA received six contributions from Purdue Pharma in 2016, totalling \$290,475.