



WISCONSIN STATE SENATOR
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Statement from Senator Dave Hansen

State Senator Dave Hansen (D-Green Bay) is calling on the Wisconsin and U.S. Attorneys General to stand up for taxpayers by holding big drug companies accountable for their role in the opioid crisis.

“When the media has a chance to talk with both the state And United States Attorneys General a good question to ask is whether or not they will stand up for taxpayers by holding big drug companies like Purdue Pharma accountable for their role in the opioid crisis.

“Twenty years ago Purdue Pharmaceuticals introduced OxyContin with the promise that it relieved pain for 12 hours—longer than any other similar medication. Purdue promoted the drug as a way to reduce addiction: One pill in the morning and one at night and a person would be pain free without having to take multiple pills during the day and at night.

“As a result Purdue made billions and OxyContin became the leading painkiller in America.

“But, for all kinds of people the drug didn’t last 12 hours and many found themselves in excruciating pain as the drug wore off. According to a Los Angeles Times investigation, Purdue has known about this for decades—even before OxyContin went on the market.

“Since 1996 even more evidence came to light from doctors, independent research and from reports of Purdue’s own sales reps. Despite increasing evidence that OxyContin is extremely addictive their response was to recommend prescribing more OxyContin.

“Just ten years ago the company pleaded guilty to misleading the public about OxyContin’s risk of addiction and paid out \$600 million---one of the largest pharmaceutical settlements in U.S. history. And three of Purdue’s top executives, including its President, pleaded guilty misbranding charges, a criminal violation and agreed to pay a total of \$34.5 million in fines.

“There is no question that people need to be responsible for the decisions they make. But there is also no question that when billion dollar corporations make decisions that they know are causing harm they should be responsible too.

“The vast majority of taxpayers in Wisconsin have played no role in the opioid crisis except to be left with picking up the tab to try to stop it.

“Will Attorney General Sessions bring the full weight of the federal government to bear on behalf of taxpayers by making the makers of these dangerously addictive drugs pay their fair share for the programs we need to end this crisis? Will our own attorney general follow the lead of other states and file suit on behalf of Wisconsin taxpayers? Those are questions that should be asked.”