



# STATE OF IOWA

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## Senate Judiciary Committee Hearing

“The New Era is the Fight Against Methamphetamine in Iowa”

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Senator Grassley and staff, thank you for the opportunity to share some thoughts with you today. I would like to begin by thanking you Senator Grassley, for your clear and consistent leadership on anti-drug issues. I believe that all drugs pose a threat to our safety, health and prosperity. Your leadership has been crucial in the fight against meth and other forms of drug abuse, improving the lives of countless Iowans and making our state a better place to work, live and raise a family.

One challenge we face today in the battle against meth is the overall relaxed attitude in the general public that the battle against drug abuse is unwinnable and deserves rethinking. While I understand the concerns of many, let me share one example of how things have gone right. Several years ago I had the opportunity to meet a man who was addicted to meth. The drug crippled his ability to earn a living. He resorted to breaking and entering to support his habit. Distraught and fed up, his wife kicked him out of the home, and he lost all contact with his child. Still, the drug held power over him and he couldn't see a reason to change.

Finally after being arrested on related charges, he sat in the back of a police car and realized he needed to change. After drying out in jail for several months, he committed to a treatment program and had successful outcomes. Today he holds a full time job as a computer technician, has the love and support of his family once again and enjoys long bike rides on the weekend.

This man is an example that when we have strong laws and law enforcement, coupled with access to quality treatment, we can defeat this and many other drugs.

Another area of success I would like to share is prevention. I am happy to report that Iowa youth soundly reject experimenting with meth. Statistics show that approximately 1% of Iowa youth

have experimented with the drug. While I believe this should be zero, I am still pleased that educators, parents and prevention professionals have worked hard to teach young people about the dangers of this drug. When fully informed on what this and other drugs can do to their bodies, Iowa youth consistently choose to avoid it, greatly increasing their opportunity to lead a full and successful life.

Even so, we must recognize that meth is arguably the most problematic drug in Iowa. It is closely linked with cases of child abuse and neglect, crime, gun violence and incarceration in our state. Iowa ODCP uses federal Byrne Jag funds to partner with multi-jurisdictional drug enforcement task forces across Iowa. These task forces serve as the front line of defense against this powerful drug. In 2014 these task forces seized hundreds of firearms that were involved in meth activity and also referred hundreds of children to the department of human services for care because of neglect and abuse in the home, much of which was linked to meth abuse.

As Byrne-Jag dollars coming to Iowa and other states has decreased, these task forces have had to ask for more support from local governments. Thus far many local governments have stepped in to help support their efforts, but I would like to stress that only so much can be done from the local level. The federal Byrne-Jag dollars have proved to be the crucial glue holding many task forces together. I would ask for continued consideration of the multiplier effect these dollars have in the battle against meth.

Other challenges we face in the battle against meth include legal rulings which make it more challenging for law enforcement to disrupt drug trafficking organizations and confusion in the public about the best approach to defeating drug abuse. I believe it is time to reaffirm our opposition to this and other harmful drugs while at the same time ensuring access to treatment programs that can help people turn their lives around and become productive citizens once again. We also need strong prevention programs to educate and empower young people to make healthy choices for their future.

We should also applaud combined efforts which have helped decrease meth labs in our state from over 1500 to below 200. This is not an insignificant achievement and we have many partners to thank. However, cartel activity that spans Mexico and the United states has helped fill the vacuum, with very pure and powerful forms of meth being found across our state that has been trafficked in from south of the border.

The United States should revisit the issue of meth precursor control agreements with Mexico, as it appears the current system has not been effective in thwarting production of the drug in Mexico. We also need the commitment of federal partners to help stop the flow of this dangerous drug across our nation.

Let me end by again thanking you Senator, for holding this hearing to gain insight into the challenges we face. I believe that strong law enforcement efforts, coupled with quality prevention and treatment programs can work to defeat the menace of meth in our State. I look forward to being a resource to you and our federal partners as we face this challenge together.

Steve Lukan-Director

