Senate Caucus on International Narcotics Control

Hearing on “the dangers of synthetic cannabinoids and stimulants” – April 6, 2011

Questions for the Record

**Questions for Michael Rozga**

1. **Further Efforts**

The efforts on part of community anti-drug coalitions, law enforcement, members of the health community, and the public at large to fight the use and abuse of synthetic drugs are ongoing. However, it is clear that we are only at the beginning of a broader problem and future efforts to stop this abuse will be needed.

**Question:**

* *What more do you believe needs to be done to halt the spread of these drugs?*

Thank you for your very important question. As I am sure you are all too well aware there are many areas in which we need to improve. Following are four areas that are critical to reducing the impact of these drugs.

**Education:** Information on synthetic drugs of abuse need to be included in existing curriculum, materials and public education/awareness efforts. Nationwide public service announcements focusing on the growing threat and empowering parents and our communities to include synthetic drugs when talking with their kids and communities. Greater focus on prevention and demand will help curb the appetite for drugs overall. The public needs to be better educated of how quickly, cleverly, and boldly these substances are distributed. Just because something is legal does not mean it is safe. Do not ingest, inject, inhale anything.

**Enforcement:** Provide guidance/training to officers on the look, smell, effects, etc. of emerging synthetic drugs and how to enforce new state/federal laws. We need to look at laws pertaining to questionable retail outlets (head shops, Internet sites, etc.) who knowingly manufacture and/or distribute substances under false pretenses. How does law enforcement stay ahead of the chemistry? Analogue statutes appear to have limitation dealing with the complexity of the underlying

chemistry. If the DEA has trouble prosecuting these new drugs and the new synthetics still to come, how can state prosecutor expect to do better? Is there a better way to define these controlled substance than by their chemical names or make-up, e.g. by the effects they have on the human body? How can we deal with the source of these problems, the head shops and Internet dealers who are selling these substances?

**Policy:** Establish a Task Force of public and private sector experts (DEA, doctors, scientists) to forecast the future of synthetic designer drugs and recommend smart scheduling and other policy changes to more effectively address these and related emerging issues. We need to be proactive, not reactive.

**Early Warning System/Communication:** Create protocols for key service providers to include law enforcement, health care, first responders, treatment, education, poison centers and others to quickly AND credibly communicate emerging drug issues and developments with one another AND state/national public safety and public health agencies.