

AG Hood Wants Stiffer Penalties for Irresponsible Drug Manufacturers

Attorney General Jim Hood and a bipartisan group of 38 other attorneys general are calling on congressional leaders to promptly pass measures to help hold opioid manufacturers accountable for not identifying suspicious shipments of the drug that contribute to the overwhelming opioid epidemic in our country.

The coalition sent a letter to the chair and ranking member of the Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee, and the

Judiciary Committee, urging them to pass S.2456, the Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act (CARA) 2.0 and S.2440, the Comprehensive Addiction Reform, Education, and Safety (CARES) Act. Among other provisions, CARA 2.0 and the CARES Act increase penalties on drug manufacturers that fail to report suspicious transactions and maintain effective controls against diversion of their drugs to the illicit market. The bills would increase the

civil penalty from \$10,000 to \$100,000 per violation for negligence in reporting suspicious activity and double the criminal penalty to \$500,000 for companies that willfully disregard or knowingly fail to keep proper reporting systems or fail to report suspicious activity.

“Opioid manufacturers can no longer get away with turning a blind eye to their contribution to the drug crisis

our country is facing,” said General Hood. “They have a duty to ensure that they take steps to prevent drugs from entering the illicit market and devastating our communities. Mississippi filed suit against these companies several years ago for misleading consumers about the addictiveness of these pills, and this call to Congress is just one more step that we hope will save lives in Mississippi and across the country.”

General Hood led the nation in filing the first lawsuit on behalf of a state against multiple drug manufacturing companies for falsely

marketing opioids as rarely addictive. The suit was filed in December 2015 in Hinds County Chancery Court against 17 companies. General Hood charges that the companies deceived Mississippi Medicaid, doctors, and consumers in order to boost profits at the expense of innocent victims.

More information on CARA 2.0 and the CARES Act can be found at congress.gov.

Other states signing the letter include Alaska, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, District of Columbia, Florida, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Puerto Rico, Rhode Island, South Carolina, South Dakota, Vermont, Virgin Islands, Virginia and Washington.

Conservation Corner

by James Cummins
Executive Director
of Wildlife Mississippi

One of the largest freshwater fish is the American paddlefish. It is easily distinguished by its large mouth and elongated snout. This snout is spatula-like in appearance and comprises one-third to one-half the length of their entire body. This fish is also known by various nicknames such as “spoonbill,” “spoonies,” and “spoonbill catfish.”

Found primarily in the Mississippi River and its larger tributaries, the paddlefish reaches lengths of 5 to 6 feet and typically weighs between 40 and 50 pounds. Larger specimens have been found weighing up to 150 pounds. The largest paddlefish on record was caught in Iowa and weighed in at 198 pounds. Though the life span of the paddlefish is often hard to determine, many believe they live 50 years or more.

Paddlefish feed by filtering out zooplankton organisms from the water. They accomplish this by using the filaments located on their gill arches. These arches, commonly referred to as “gill rakers,” actually catch the food as the paddlefish swim through the water with their mouths agape. As the adult paddlefish have no teeth, these rakers strain the food that comes in so that the fish can easily digest their meal.

The strange feeding habit of the paddlefish helps to explain why this primitive looking fish is rarely taken on hook-and-line. Most paddlefish are caught in seines or nets in a commercial manner. With white, firm flesh and a delicate flavor, the smaller paddlefish are sometimes caught and sold without head, fins, or tail as “boneless catfish.” However, the paddlefish is most prized for its eggs, or roe, which are sold at extremely high prices as caviar.

Due to the value of their eggs, paddlefish have become a constant target for poachers. Because of this, they are a protected resource over a large part of their range. In addition to the harm caused by poachers, the number of paddlefish is dwindling as a result of habitat destruction. Paddlefish need free flowing rivers with areas of shallow pools. But today’s rivers are being transformed through dam construction, dredging, and draining. While paddlefish are extremely mobile—sometimes moving more than 2,000 miles within a river system in a single year—they are having difficulty finding suitable areas for spawning.

The paddlefish is a strange, yet intriguing specimen and we should do all that we can to preserve this species for future generations.

Check with your local Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks’ authority to find out the status of the paddlefish in your area.

James L. Cummins is executive director of Wildlife Mississippi.

Smoking and smokeless tobacco rates decrease in middle and high school students

The 2018 Mississippi Youth Tobacco Survey from the Social Science Research Center at Mississippi State University has been released with promising news for the state.

The data indicate that smoking and smokeless tobacco rates have decreased for Mississippi middle and high school students from 2016 to 2017. And while e-cigarette use has increased for high school students, it has decreased for middle school students. This is an encouraging development for a state leading the nation in preventable deaths, 5,400 a year of which are caused by tobacco use.

Mississippi high school students

- Current cigarette use fell in 2017 to 7.2 percent, compared to 9.4 percent in 2016
- Current smokeless tobacco use fell to 6.6 percent, compared to 7.1 percent in 2016
- Current e-cigarette use rose to 11.5 percent, compared to 10.3 percent in 2016

Mississippi middle school students

- Current cigarette use fell to 1.5 percent, compared to 3.8 percent in 2016
- Current smokeless tobacco use fell to 3 percent, compared to 4 percent in 2016
- Current e-cigarette use fell to 4.8 percent, compared to 5.9 percent in 2016

“The decrease in middle school students that currently smoke is significant,” said Amy Winter, Director of the Office of Tobacco Control at the Mississippi State Department of Health (MSDH). “Other reductions from 2016 may not be as large, but their continuing downward trend is promising for the future health of our children.”

The Mississippi Tobacco-Free Coalitions, MSDH, and Smokefree Mississippi partners work together to educate all Mississippians about the dangers of tobacco use and exposure to secondhand smoke in all public places.

For more information on smokefree air ordinances and tobacco prevention programs, call the MSDH Office of Tobacco Control at 601-991-6050 or visit www.healthymss.ms.gov/tobacco.

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Wheat	Jul 18	2018 July	5.43	-0.22	5.21	0.13
Milo	Dec 18	2018 Aug-Sep	4.25	-0.56	3.69	0.00
Corn	Jul 18	2018 May	4.06	-0.05	4.01	0.02
Corn	Sep 18	2018 Aug	4.15	0.01	4.16	0.02
Soybeans Siron	Nov 18	2018 Aug-Sep	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Soybeans G'wood	Jul 18	2018 May	10.42	-0.07	10.35	0.06
Soybeans G'wood	Nov 18	2018 Aug-Sep	10.54	-0.17	10.37	0.06
Soybeans Minter City	Nov 18	2018 Aug-Sep	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
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