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Arkansas counties and cities file joint lawsuit against opioid drug manufacturers

Unique, unified approach is unlike any other in the country and ensures recovered damages stay in Arkansas

LITTLE ROCK, Ark. (March 21, 2018) – In a unified and unprecedented approach against the opioid drug industry, the state of Arkansas, Arkansas counties and Arkansas cities announced today that together they have filed the first of many complaints. This initial state, county and city lawsuit was filed in the Circuit Court of Crittenden County.

This unique litigation approach is unlike any others in the country and will represent 90 percent of Arkansas’s population, with 72 counties and 210 cities participating. It is believed that it will cost billions to stop the Arkansas opioid epidemic and that this money should come from the companies that caused the problem instead of taxpayers.

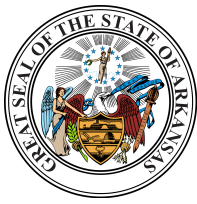
“Though other lawsuits have been filed in federal courts across the country, Arkansas is the only state that has united in this fashion,” said Chris Villines, executive director of the Association of Arkansas Counties. “Instead of fighting and competing with each other on critically needed settlement dollars for our cities and counties, all of the cities and counties are working together to do what’s best for Arkansas.”

The epidemic is real and has ravaged Arkansas families for years. While the U.S. experiences more than 42,000 fatal overdoses a year, Arkansas experiences over 400, a number that has increased nearly 300 percent since 2000 and coincides with opioid sales quadrupling. Additionally, Arkansas ranks second in the nation for ages 12-17 in misuse of opioids (4.67%) behind Alabama, which is also the only other state with a higher opioid prescribing rate than Arkansas, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

“It is hard to find anyone who hasn’t felt the effects of an opioid addiction from family, friends or even in themselves,” said Kirk Lane, Arkansas State Drug Director. “Though great strides have been made recently to curb the epidemic – especially helping cities fund necessary resources like the opiate antagonist Naloxone (Narcan) – much more could be done to fund ongoing programs for education and prevention.”

In 2017, there were more opioid prescriptions than people – enough for every man, woman and child to have 80 pills per year. Hospitals and rehabilitation systems cannot keep pace with the influx of victims. The resources of public safety officials are constantly strained to meet the overwhelming needs of opioid-related emergencies. As a result, the state of Arkansas, its counties, cities and taxpayers have funded the enormous societal costs of the opioid epidemic, but have had insufficient revenue to turn the tide of the epidemic.

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“Arkansas’s one-voice approach to this lawsuit is one that gives us a seat at the table,” said Don Zimmerman, executive director of the Arkansas Municipal League. “Neither the state or any county or city is big enough alone; this litigation approach ensures that recovered damages remain in Arkansas.”

For more information about the lawsuit, or to find additional resources on the opioid epidemic in Arkansas, please visit ARCounties.org, ARML.org or APERMA.com.

About the Association of Arkansas Counties (AAC)

The AAC supports and promotes the idea that all elected officials must have the opportunity to act together in order to solve mutual problems as a unified group. To further this goal, the AAC is committed to providing a single source of cooperative support and information for all counties and county and district officials. To learn more, visit ARCounties.org or find the AAC on social media @75ARCounties ([Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/75ARCounties) and [Twitter](https://twitter.com/75ARCounties)) or on [LinkedIn](https://www.linkedin.com/company/75ARCounties).

About the Arkansas Municipal League (AML)

Founded in 1934, the AML exists to act as the official representative of Arkansas cities and towns before the state and federal government, to provide a clearinghouse for information and answers and to offer a forum for discussion and sharing of mutual concerns. In doing these things, the central purpose of the AML is to advance the interest and welfare of the people residing in the cities and towns in Arkansas. To learn more, visit ARML.org or find the AML on Facebook ([@Arkansas.Municipal.League](https://www.facebook.com/ArkansasMunicipalLeague)) or Twitter ([@ARMuniLeague](https://twitter.com/ARMuniLeague)).

About the Arkansas Public Entities Risk Management Association (APERMA)

The APERMA is a comprehensive risk management program created by and for Arkansas public entities. Its mission is to provide protection of the physical and financial assets from a covered loss, to provide responsive claims handling services that are fair to all members and to provide expert legal advice and representation related to all public entity operations. To learn more, visit APERMA.com.