

## NEWS RELEASE

# Luther Strange

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## AG, STATE DRUG TASK FORCE PRAISE NEW LAW AND PUBLIC AWARENESS “ANTI-SMURFING” CAMPAIGN TO COMBAT METH

(MONTGOMERY) – Attorney General Luther Strange today joined with fellow members of the Alabama Drug Abuse Task Force, the Governor’s Office and various other business and association leaders to praise Alabama’s new anti-methamphetamine law, considered among the strongest in the nation. They also announced the launching of a major public awareness “Anti-Smurfing Campaign” that is being sponsored by the Consumer Healthcare Products Association. CHPA is a national association representing the makers and consumers of over the counter medicines and dietary supplements.

Alabama is the first state to participate in the Anti-Smurfing Campaign, which is an education program to be carried out on a voluntary basis by pharmacies and retailers throughout the state. In recent years, Alabama law enforcement officials have increasingly encountered a problem known as smurfing, which is when criminals have individuals purchase small amounts of pseudoephedrine from several different locations, circumventing the prior law to acquire large quantities for the manufacture of meth.

The Anti-Smurfing Campaign’s mission is to make clear that purchasing pseudoephedrine for a meth cook is a crime that could lead to jail time and have severe consequences. Buying a cold or allergy product for a stranger is not an innocent or harmless act but one that could have disastrous effects for the community and tragic effects for children who are endangered by being in the environment of meth labs and drug addicts.

“Methamphetamine is a terrible drug that causes great damage to our society, but I am encouraged that we are continuing to make significant progress against it,” said Attorney General Strange. “Our strong new law is the result of the cooperative efforts of our dedicated law enforcement community, including district attorneys, drug task force leaders, sheriffs, police chiefs; as well as concerned business leaders and others. I particularly want to thank former Representative Blaine Galliher, who now serves in the Governor’s Office, and Senator Bill Holtzclaw for their outstanding leadership to pass this law.”

Attorney General Strange added, “Public education is vital to make our fight against meth more effective, and I commend the CHPA for launching its Anti-Smurfing Campaign in Alabama. Our message is that if you help get medicine for the manufacture of meth, you too are committing a felony crime for which you will face serious consequences.”



Galliher stated, “No one in Alabama has done more to fight the meth epidemic than Alabama law enforcement officials. We are proud our legislative leaders and Governor Bentley supported our Legislature creating new safeguards to crackdown on smurfing and other aspects of meth production. I am very pleased that we have balanced the needs to law enforcement without dramatically infringing on the rights of our law-abiding citizens.”

During the past session The Alabama Legislature enacted important measures that make Alabama's meth law significantly stronger, giving law enforcement enhanced tools and making penalties tougher. Among these are:

- Pseudoephedrine must be kept behind the counter and may only be sold by a licensed pharmacist. It now is a crime for a general retail entity to sell these products.
- More stringent identification requirements are imposed to purchase pseudoephedrine. Only a valid non-suspended drivers' license, non-drivers' government ID, military ID or passport may be accepted.
- Smurfing-- illegally purchasing, attempting or conspiring to purchase, possess, sell, transfer or solicit, or otherwise furnish pseudo ephedrine and associated substances for the purpose of manufacturing a controlled substance, regardless if the amount is lawful – now is a felony crime.
- A drug offender database will be created, by which any person convicted of certain drug offenses would be blocked from purchasing pseudoephedrine for a designated amount of time, ranging from seven to 10 years.
- The new law's provisions will be integrated into the current computerized system of real-time tracking sales, further enabling law enforcement and pharmacies to combat illegal sales of pseudoephedrine.
- The new law allows local law enforcement and prosecutors, as well as innocent land owners, to recoup the tremendous cost of investigating, prosecuting and cleaning up after the dangerous and often environmentally hazardous clandestine laboratories.
- For the first time ever, the possession of the paraphernalia used in the manufacturing process of methamphetamine and other controlled substances is a class C felony and where a firearm is present, it is enhanced to a class B felony.

The Alabama Drug Abuse Task Force is responsible for the oversight and implementation of the new law's enhanced provisions. The task force chairman is Barry Matson, chief deputy director of the Alabama District Attorney's Association. The law sets out that the task force will include representatives of the Attorney General's Office and numerous other state agencies, law enforcement professionals, and pharmaceutical and business groups. The task force is required by statute to publicly report to the Legislature the status of illegal drug availability, education, prevention, treatment, investigation, prosecution and incarceration for those that manufacture, sell and traffic illegal drugs in Alabama.