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For Immediate Release

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Gov. Shumlin Signs Law to Set Opiate Pill Limits for Some Medical Procedures

Burlington – As an opiate epidemic continues to grip Vermont and the rest of America, Gov. Peter Shumlin today signed a law that seeks to address the source of that crisis: Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved opioid painkillers that are handed out at an alarming rate. The new law will set limits on the number of powerful, addictive painkillers that can be prescribed for some procedures in Vermont.

“We need to end the days where Vermonters go to the doctor for a minor procedure only to be sent home with enough painkillers to set off a lifetime of addiction,” Gov. Shumlin said. “This law will not solve all our problems, but it will allow us to finally go after the source of our addiction challenges: legal, FDA-approved opiates that are handed out like candy. Until we change the culture of pain management in this country, we will not be able to build out treatment centers fast enough to meet the demand of those becoming addicted to opiates.”

The legislation, S.243, directs the Commissioner of Health to adopt rules governing the prescription of opioids for acute pain and place limits on the number of pills that can be prescribed for some procedures. The rules would apply to all prescribers, including dentists. The law will also require prescribers to provide all patients with information and education concerning safe use, storage, and disposal of prescription opioids. It would also require the co-prescribing of Naloxone, a drug that helps reverse opiate-induced overdoses, in certain circumstances.

The Governor called for such limits in his State of the State Address where he placed the blame for America’s opiate crisis at the feet of the FDA and pharmaceutical industry, which together have enabled pain management practices that in 2010 and [2012](#) resulted in the issuing of enough opiate prescriptions to keep every adult in America high for an entire month and to give every American their own bottle of pills, respectively.

The over prescription of opioids is killing Americans at an alarming rate. Recent data from the Center for Disease Control (CDC) show that between 1999 and 2014, overdose deaths involving prescription opioids quadrupled, with more than 165,000 people dying.

The Governor has long been a critic of America’s pain management practices. After a baffling Super Bowl advertisement promoting a drug to help Americans take more opiates, the Governor called the ad poorly timed and a shameful attempt to exploit America’s addiction crisis to boost corporate profits and urged the drug makers to pull it off the air. He is also working with governors across the country to develop uniform prescribing practices for opioids.

The new law also strengthens Vermont's Prescription Monitoring System (VPMS), requiring pharmacies to upload the VPMS every day and query the system when dispensing any opiates, with certain exemptions. It also enhances required training for prescribers and pharmacists on the safe and effective prescribing of controlled substances and identifying abuse and diversion.

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