

U.S. SENATOR MICHAEL BENNET

Member: Agriculture, HELP, Banking and Aging Committees

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Bennet Backs Effort to Crack Down on Black Market Drugs, Protect Colorado Consumers

*Thefts of Medical Product Cargo and Pharmacy Robberies Have Skyrocketed by 350,
According to Estimates*

Washington, DC – Colorado U.S. Senator Michael Bennet today cosponsored a bipartisan bill to protect consumers from stolen medical supplies and drugs and to curb the accessibility of addictive prescription drugs. The Strengthening and Focusing Enforcement to Deter Organized Stealing and Enhanced Safety Act, or the SAFE DOSES Act, would prevent stolen medical products and prescription drugs from entering the black market by cracking down on the theft of medical product cargo and increasing penalties for pharmacy robbery. The bill was introduced by Sens. Chuck Schumer (D-NY) and Jon Kyl (R-AZ).

“Colorado families should not have to worry that medical supplies or prescription drugs they buy legally might have been stolen, mishandled or sold on the black market before reaching their homes,” said Bennet. “This bill will help crack down on the sale and supply of black market drugs and prevent them from finding their way onto the store shelf.”

Thefts of medical product cargo and pharmacy robberies have skyrocketed by 350 percent according to some estimates. These products then enter the black market and often are re-introduced into the legitimate supply chain, threatening the safety of consumers and increasing accessibility of addictive prescription drugs. Unsuspecting consumers are at-risk of purchasing improperly cared-for and potentially ineffective or dangerous stolen medical products that are back in the legitimate market.

Additionally, with current punishments for drug or medical supply theft too weak, highly addictive prescription drugs are increasingly stolen from all points of the supply chain and resold, helping to fuel a fast-growing drug abuse problem across the country. Under current law, the penalty for stealing music CDs is the same as stealing the most complex medical drugs despite the vast difference in ability to harm consumers when these products return into the normal supply chain.

Specifically, the bipartisan bill would modernize and strengthen Title 18 of the United States Criminal Code by:

- Specifically criminalizing the theft, storage and transportation of medical products as well as the altering of labels of stolen or expired medical products with the intent to introduce the product into the supply chain;
- Increasing sentences for the theft, transportation and storage of stolen products;

- Enhancing penalties for the “fences” who knowingly obtain stolen medical products for resale into the supply chain;
- Enhancing penalties when harm occurs or trust is broken – in other words, where death results from ingestion of a stolen substance or where the defendant is employed by an organization in the supply chain;
- Making theft of medical products a predicate for the Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations (RICO) law and federal wiretap law;
- Increasing possible sentences for robbing pharmacies of controlled substances; and
- Providing restitution to victims injured by stolen medical products.

This bill is just one step in Bennet’s comprehensive effort to improve drug safety. Last Congress, he introduced the *Drug Safety and Accountability Act*, which would enhance the ability of the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the pharmaceutical industry to ensure U.S. drugs are both safe and effective regardless of where they are made. Bennet plans to introduce an expanded version of this legislation again this Congress and will continue to work so that American families can trust the drugs they take are safe and made with the highest standards and quality.

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