

Opening Statement  
Chairman Mark Souder

“Fighting Methamphetamine in the Heartland: How  
Can the Federal Government Assist State and Local  
Efforts?”

Subcommittee on Criminal Justice, Drug Policy,  
and Human Resources  
Committee on Government Reform

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Good morning. It is a pleasure to have this hearing in Indiana, and I'd like to thank all of you for coming. This hearing continues our Subcommittee's work on the problem of methamphetamine abuse – a problem that is ravaging our region, our state, and our nation.

Meth is among the most powerful and dangerous drugs available. It is also relatively easy to make from common household or agricultural chemicals and simple cold medicines. It comes from two major sources of supply. The most significant source comes from the so-called “superlabs” in California and northern Mexico. By the end of the 1990's these superlabs produced over 70 percent of the nation's supply of meth. The superlabs are operated by large Mexican drug trafficking organizations that have used their established distribution and supply networks to transport meth throughout the country.

The second major source of meth comes from small, local labs that are generally unaffiliated with major trafficking organizations. These labs have proliferated throughout the country, particularly in the Midwest. The total amount of meth actually supplied by these labs is relatively small; however, the environmental damage and health hazard they create make them a serious problem for local communities, particularly the state and local law enforcement

agencies charged with the duty to uncover and clean them up. In Indiana, for example, more than 20% of the labs raided by police were discovered only after they had exploded and started fires. Children are often found at meth labs, and have frequently suffered from severe health problems as a result of the hazardous chemicals used in drug manufacturing.

Our previous hearings – held in Washington – have looked at this problem from a national perspective, but today we are going to look at a specific region that has been hard-hit by meth trafficking and abuse – right here in northeastern Indiana. In Indiana alone, the State Police reported that 1,260 drug labs were raided in 2003, up 26% from the 998 seized in 2002 – and most of those labs were meth labs. The problem is particularly severe in our rural areas, where meth cooks can steal precursor chemicals like anhydrous ammonia from local farmers, and then manufacture the drug in secrecy. Major meth trafficking organizations have also made inroads; Roman J. Montero and Cesar Anguiano, for example, were recently sentenced for running the largest meth trafficking organization in Indiana history.

The federal government has responded to the meth problem both here and elsewhere with stricter laws against the precursor chemical trade, tougher enforcement, and farsighted treatment and local assistance initiatives. The growth of the problem, however, has spurred calls for further action. Most proposals have focused on the need to assist local law enforcement in finding and cleaning up the numerous small meth labs. A well-balanced approach, however, will have to address both the smaller labs and the major traffickers that supply most of the nation's meth. The federal government must also find new ways to help states and local communities provide treatment for meth addicts, and prevent meth abuse from starting in the first place. Outreach to treatment providers, schools, and pharmacists is crucial to success.

One proposal, offered by our colleague Congressman Doug Ose, provides for a broad range of initiatives aimed at the meth problem. Among other things, HR 834 would provide funds to help states and localities find and clean up meth labs, including expanding assistance under the Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) grant program. Additional resources for treatment and prevention at

the local level are also made available. I am a co-sponsor of this bill and strongly support it.

This hearing will address these and other potential solutions to the difficult issues surrounding the meth problem here in Indiana. I first want to thank Congressman Chris Chocola for joining us today, and for the assistance that he and his staff provided to our Subcommittee in setting up this hearing. We also welcome two witnesses who have joined us to discuss the federal government's response to the meth problem: Mr. Scott Burns, Deputy Director for State and Local Affairs at the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy, and Mr. Armand McClintock, Assistant Special Agent in Charge at the Indianapolis District Office of the Drug Enforcement Administration.

At a hearing like this, it is vitally important for us to hear from the state and local agencies forced to fight on the "front lines" against meth and other illegal drugs. We welcome Mr. Melvin Carraway, Superintendent of the Indiana State Police; Mr. Curtis T. Hill, Jr., Prosecuting Attorney for Elkhart County; Mr. Bill Wargo, Chief Investigator at the Elkhart County Prosecuting Attorney's Office; Detective Daniel Anderson of the Starke County Sheriff's Department; Corporal Tony Ciriello of the Kosciusko County Sheriff's Department; Mr. Kevin Enyeart, the Cass County Prosecutor; Mr. Doug Harp, Chief Deputy at the Noble County Sheriff's Office; and Sergeant Jeff Schnepf of the Logansport-Cass County Drug Task Force.

We also welcome three witnesses whose work in the field of drug treatment and prevention is of vital importance here in northeastern Indiana: Mr. Brian Connor, Acting Executive Director of the Center for the Homeless in South Bend; Mr. Barry Humble, Executive Director of the Drug & Alcohol Consortium of Allen County; and Mr. Benjamin Martin of Serenity House, Inc. We thank everyone for taking the time to join us this morning, and look forward to your testimony.