

Press Release

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### **SAFE Glen Cove Coalition: Oklahoma vs. Purdue Pharma**

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), nearly 400,000 people in the United States died of opioid overdoses between 1999 and 2017, including a record 47,600 in 2017. More than 2 million Americans now suffer from an opioid use disorder, according to government data. The epidemic has evolved to encompass illicit use of fentanyl, a synthetic ultrapowerful opioid that has caused a spike in overdoses and fatalities. Three years ago, the CDC estimated the cost of the opioid epidemic at \$78.5 billion for calendar year 2013. In 2017, the White House Council of Economic Advisers placed the price tag much higher, at \$504 billion for 2015.

A recent article in The Washington Post discusses Purdue Pharma, the maker of the painkiller onycontin, widely blamed for helping to start the epidemic after it introduced the powerful opioid to the market in 1996. The company allegedly persuaded doctors to prescribe — and overprescribe — the drug for a wide variety of ailments. In 2007, Purdue and three of its executives pleaded guilty to misconduct in their marketing of OxyContin and paid more \$600 million in fines. Authorities have argued that Purdue used deceptive marketing tactics and a sizable workforce of representatives to repeatedly visit physicians to sell them narcotics, assuring them that the drugs were rarely addictive. Many patients became addicted to the potent painkillers, and large amounts of the drug were diverted to the black market.

Purdue Pharma and the state of Oklahoma have agreed to settle a lawsuit over the drugmaker's role in the deadly opioid crisis, a milestone in the legal effort to force pharmaceutical companies to pay some of the costs of the epidemic. The deal will require Purdue and the Sackler family that owns the company to pay approximately \$270 million. Under the terms of the settlement, Purdue will contribute \$102.5 million to establish the new addiction center. Members of the Sackler family were not defendants in the case but will pay another \$75 million in personal funds over five years. Purdue also will provide \$20 million worth of treatment drugs, will pay \$12 million to cities and towns, and will cover about \$60 million in pay to private attorneys from two law firms that have represented Oklahoma in the case. The addiction center would be housed at Oklahoma State University's Center for Wellness and Recovery in Tulsa and would be overseen by an independent board.

Oklahoma is free to continue its lawsuit against two other defendants and their subsidiaries — Johnson & Johnson, the 37th-largest company in the United States, and Teva Pharmaceutical Industries, an Israel-based manufacturer that focuses mainly on generic drugs. The two companies, which have asked to be tried separately from Purdue, are slated to go to trial on May 28th.

Oklahoma contends that Purdue, Johnson & Johnson and Teva bear some responsibility for thousands of opioid deaths across the state, in addition to the health care, law enforcement and treatment costs of the state's addiction crisis. Purdue and others face similar claims in several other courts, and the first major settlement in the flood of lawsuits could help set the bar for compensation sought by hundreds of states, cities, counties and Native American tribes for the costs incurred in responding to the epidemic.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is a federal agency that conducts and supports health promotion, prevention and preparedness activities in the United States, with the goal of improving overall public health. To learn more about the CDC please visit [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov).

To read the full article in the Washington Post please visit <https://www.washingtonpost.com/.../purdue...state...lawsuit/.../>

The SAFE Glen Cove Coalition is conducting an opioid prevention awareness campaign entitled, "Keeping Glen Cove SAFE," in order to educate and update the community regarding opioid use and its consequences. To learn more about the SAFE Glen Cove Coalition please follow us on [www.facebook.com/safeglencovecoalition](http://www.facebook.com/safeglencovecoalition) or visit SAFE's website to learn more about the Opioid Epidemic at [www.safeglencove.org](http://www.safeglencove.org).