

Press Release

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SAFE Glen Cove Coalition: Ohio Judge Tackling the Opioid Crisis

According to The Washington Post, U.S. District Judge Dan Aaron Polster has urged some of the nation's most combative lawyers to create a settlement that would funnel billions of dollars from drug companies to cities and counties ravaged by the opioid epidemic.

The Judge wants this to happen as soon as possible because so many lives are at stake. Judge Polster's best motivational tool has been a firm trial date of October 21st when opening arguments are scheduled to begin. In response to this deadline, some of the drug companies being sued filed legal papers asking Judge Polster to step down claiming his zeal for a settlement, and references to the death toll from opioids and the role of drug companies in the crisis, shows he cannot be an unbiased jurist. The drug companies have broadly denied they're responsible for the tremendous spike in addiction and fatal overdoses from prescription opioids that began about two decades ago. This legal maneuver by the defendants may have only a modest chance of derailing the trial, but it puts into perspective what is at stake- billions of dollars and the broader consequences to public health and individuals with substance-use disorders.

Those companies are feeling the pressure of recent legal developments whereby the state of Oklahoma won a \$572 million settlement from drugmaker Johnson and Johnson after that company chose to go to trial, rather than settle. Purdue Pharma also settled with Oklahoma for \$270 million, and its owners, the Sackler family, are hoping to close a multibillion-dollar agreement with the Cleveland plaintiffs that would end their ownership as Purdue goes into bankruptcy. Several other companies have also settled in advance of trial.

Judge Polster certified a type of class-action negotiation arrangement that would let any city, county or other municipal entity participate in a settlement, in addition to the more than 2,000 that have already filed suit. A global settlement, however, would be hard to pull off in just a few weeks, making a courtroom confrontation seem almost inevitable. Two counties, Cuyahoga and Summit, of northeast Ohio, are scheduled to go first, in a test of how the others and the companies may fare before a jury.

Legal experts maintain that settling can be a mixed blessing: It can speed up a long, often unpredictable process and be less costly for everyone involved. But some contentious claims are best

tested in a trial, one that can include witnesses testifying in open court and in the presence of a jury, as would be the case in Judge Polster's courtroom.

In court and in public appearances, Judge Polster has repeatedly lamented the drug crisis of the past two decades. He has spoken of the death toll and the need to help communities pay for addiction treatment, medical care and emergency services and has also made clear that he would prefer the executive and legislative branches of government do more to deal with the opioid epidemic.

The Washington Post is a major American daily newspaper published in Washington, D.C., with a particular emphasis on national politics and the federal government. To read the full article please visit <https://www.washingtonpost.com/health/a-federal-judge-vowed-to-tackle-the-opioid-crisis-drug-companies-say-thats-a-sign-of-bias/2019/>.

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 or visit SAFE's website to learn more about the Opioid Epidemic at www.safeglencove.org