

Press Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE REALEASE

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SAFE Glen Cove Coalition: Opioid Epidemic: A Trial to Come in 2020

The Washington Post recently released an article regarding the nationwide opioid litigation whereby Federal Judge Dan Aaron Polster of Ohio scheduled a trial against major pharmacy chains for next October and proposed sending three other cases back to other federal courts where they originated.

Judge Polster is in charge of the nearly 2,500 lawsuits filed against the drug industry in federal courts across the country. These cases are known as the National Prescription Opiate Litigation, a collection of lawsuits brought by cities, counties, Native American tribes and others against major players in the drug industry. Those lawsuits seek payments for companies' alleged roles in the opioid crisis that has taken the lives of more than 400,000 people over the past two decades.

The lawsuits, filed across the United States, were consolidated in Judge Polster's northeast Ohio courthouse beginning in 2017 by a panel of federal judges and have grown to nearly 2,500, Polster said in a written order Tuesday. Judge Polster will preside over a case that pits two Ohio counties, Summit and Cuyahoga, against some of the nation's largest pharmacy chains. Those companies include CVS, Walgreens, Rite-Aid and others. The trial is set for October 13th.

According to the Post, drug manufacturers and distributors have agreed, or have been ordered, to pay hundreds of millions of dollars in multiple settlements and one verdict reached in state and federal courts this year but the pharmacy chains have not been accounted for. When the first federal trial against six drug industry defendants ended in an 11th-hour settlement last month, Walgreens, the lone pharmacy chain among the defendants, did not participate.

The case settled last month, in which Cuyahoga and Summit counties were also the plaintiffs, is considered to be a "bellwether trial," designed to help predict how other parties might fare if their cases eventually came before a jury. A \$260 million settlement involving drug wholesalers McKesson Corp., AmerisourceBergen and Cardinal Health, as well as generic drug manufacturer Teva Pharmaceuticals, canceled that proceeding just hours before it was set to begin.

Judge Polster has been urging a mass settlement for nearly two years, but with so many competing interests he has been unable to do so and feels that if things continue in this direction it will simply take

too long to reach each category of plaintiff and defendant, much less each individual plaintiff and defendant. Meanwhile, the opioid crisis rages on. Judge Polster proposed sending three trials to other federal courts in an effort to expedite this process. A lawsuit filed by the city of Chicago against Purdue Pharma and other drug manufacturers would go back to federal court in Illinois. (Purdue has filed for bankruptcy and a federal judge has halted all litigation against the company and its owners, members of the Sackler family, until April.)

Across the United States there are a variety of cases that are being sent to the federal court, all in hopes to help aid the end of the opioid epidemic. Officials have acted and have spoken out to the largest drug distributors by informing them that the "current out-of-court settlement is not being supported". These officials aren't backing down from this fight against opioids; thus, the trial is coming, and we can only hope the outcome is in favor of the ones affected by opioids.

The Washington Post has provided coverage of the opioid epidemic from inception. The Post is a major American daily newspaper published in Washington, D.C. It has the largest circulation in the Washington metropolitan area. To read the full article please visit https://www.washingtonpost.com/health/pharmacy-chains-face-october-2020-trial-over-their-role-in-the-opioid-crisis/2019/11/19/61666ee4-0b1b-11ea-bd9d-c628fd48b3a0_story.html#comments-wrapper.

SAFE, Inc. is the only alcohol and substance abuse prevention, intervention and education agency in the City of Glen Cove. Its 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