

City of Gary files lawsuit against opioid manufacturers and distributors

By **crusader** - February 8, 2018



In response to the financial burden created by the opioid epidemic, the city of Gary filed a lawsuit against manufacturers and distributors of opioids.

The City of Gary is facing the ever-escalating costs associated with combatting the opioid epidemic. In continued efforts to confront this crisis, the City filed a complaint in Lake County Superior Court on January 29, 2018 seeking to recover damages for use of public resources to fight the opioid epidemic.

The complaint which includes over 25 defendants, alleges that the manufacturers, distributors and other entities intentionally misled the public about the dangers of opioids. The complaint outlines the history of how these defendants downplayed the risks associated with opioids such as OxyContin, Fentanyl and Percocet while aggressively marketing them. This negligent behavior has led to a significant increase in the City's budgets for law enforcement, emergency care, first responder overtime, Narcan training and prevention and treatment programs. There will be no cost to City taxpayers with this filing.

Mayor Karen Freeman-Wilson said: "I have seen addiction as a deputy prosecutor, defense attorney, drug court judge and Indiana Attorney General. We understand the scourge of addiction created by illegal drugs. To think that legal drugs have been manufactured and distributed in a way that increases and risks the harm to citizens of Gary and other communities is unconscionable. As Mayor, I have a responsibility to protect our resources and

there is no doubt in my mind that the citizens in this community are our most treasured commodity. We are excited to have an experienced and aggressive legal team fighting for our citizens.”

As a direct result of the opioid and eventual heroin epidemic more than 17,000 Americans died from prescription opioids in 2015 and the number continues to steadily grow, specifically in places such as the City of Gary, Indiana. Hospitals in Indiana have seen a 60 percent increase in non-fatal drug overdoses from 2011 to 2015, with deadly overdoses rose by an average of 3.5 percent each year, according to a report from the Indiana State Department of Health. Indiana has also seen an increase in the number of children placed in foster care because of their parents’ addiction.

Paul J. Napoli of Napoli Shkolnik, the firm the City has partnered with in this endeavor said: “We are committed to working with the City in their fight against the makers of these dangerous and addictive painkillers.”

Napoli Shkolnik PLLC is uniquely positioned to take on the complex task of pursuing opioid litigation on behalf of government entities. The firm has a long and distinguished history of representing counties, cities, and other municipalities. It also has expertise in pharmaceutical litigation. Numerous state and federal courts across the country have appointed Napoli Shkolnik to leadership positions in many of the largest pharmaceutical cases ever filed and the firm has been involved in nearly every major pharmaceutical mass tort case over the last two decades.

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