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Deadline Day to Opt Out of Federal Opioid Negotiating Class



A District Court judge in Ohio is overseeing a collection of more than 2,500 lawsuits filed against opioid manufacturers. (Adobe Stock)



November 22, 2019

COLUMBUS, Ohio – Cities and counties in Ohio and across the country must decide by today whether they want to be a part of [a possible multi-billion-dollar opioid settlement](#).

In U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Ohio, the National Prescription Opiate Litigation is a collection of more than 2,500 lawsuits against manufacturers and others in the drug industry for their alleged roles in the opioid crisis.

The judge set a November 22 deadline for jurisdictions to opt out of a [Negotiating Class](#). Attorney Hunter Shkolnik – of the firm Napoli Shkolnik – is counsel for several Ohio cities and counties, and explains the Negotiating Class makes the possibility of a class settlement more feasible.

"This is really just a first step," says Shkolnik. "And it's an easier method to help them get to the point where there will be a settlement and then, they can vote whether or not they like the settlement or not. So, that's why I think we're seeing a very small number go the route of opting out."

Some communities opting out are doing so with the intention of pursuing their own legal action against opioid manufacturers.

According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, nearly 130 Americans die each day from opioid-related drug overdoses.

Shkolnik was lead attorney for Cuyahoga County in the first bellwether trial in national opioid litigation. In October, four drug companies settled with Cuyahoga and Summit counties for \$260 million.

He contends the lawyers for this Negotiating Class would only present a settlement offer that is beneficial to the plaintiffs.

"This is a very important step to bring closure to the epidemic affecting cities, towns and counties in Ohio," says Shkolnik. "We need to bring this litigation to closure; we need to get the compensation where it's needed to treat the people who are addicted. That's the key."

A total sum of a possible settlement has not been determined, however there's an online database that calculates estimates for local governments. For example, it estimates Franklin County's possible allocation could be roughly \$3.6 million.

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