

Opioids and the Courts

In the News: February 28, 2020



National

[Opioid companies say lawyers' fee demand threatens settlement talks](#)

Reuters

Johnson & Johnson (JNJ.N) and other drug companies facing thousands of lawsuits over their role in the opioid epidemic have warned that settlement talks will be “severely” jeopardized if plaintiffs’ lawyers are allowed to assess a fee payment worth billions of dollars.

Major distributors such as McKesson Corp (MCK.N) and drugmakers including Teva Pharmaceutical Industries Ltd (TEVA.TA) joined in the request that U.S. District Judge Dan Polster in Cleveland, Ohio, reject a request by a committee of plaintiffs’ lawyers for a 7% fee assessed against any settlements. They filed their brief late Wednesday.

The request could amount to \$3.3 billion, based on a \$48 billion settlement proposal that five companies have been negotiating with various state attorneys general.

National

[Testimony of HHS Secretary Alex Azar](#)

U.S. Senate Finance Committee

The Budget also proposes to expand the Regional Partnership Grant program by \$40 million each year which will increase funding for grants that help courts, child welfare agencies, and other government and community entities work together [to] improve practices [addressing] the impact of substance abuse, including opioids, on child welfare. The Budget proposes an increase of \$30 million each year for the Court Improvement Program to help courts improve practices and comply with new mandates in the Family First Act.

Pennsylvania

[Cumberland County opioid intervention court marks two years of saving lives](#)

News 21

“They start reporting daily to court. They have a daily treatment requirement. They are drug tested several times per week. And we have a great team. We see them every day, so we form different relationships through the criminal justice process than people have ever experienced with the court,” said Judge Jessica Brewbaker.

The court recently lengthened the program to ensure participants are achieving specific markers of success and establishing a firm foundation of recovery.

Over the past two years, Cumberland County has seen a [reduction in overdose deaths of more than 50 percent].

Tyler Gutshall, one of the first people to get into the program shared: “It’s so rewarding, the end product of it, and every day I wake up and I’m like, yeah. this is good. This is the life I always wanted.”