



# Opioids and the Courts News: May 17, 2019

## National

### [5 states announce new suits over prescription opioids](#)

Associated Press

Five more state attorneys general announced legal filings Thursday seeking to hold the company that makes OxyContin responsible for an opioid addiction crisis that's now the leading cause of accidental deaths across the country and in many states.

The company, Connecticut-based Purdue Pharma, blasted the claims, saying they're based on "stunningly overbroad legal theories, which if adopted by courts, will undermine the bedrock legal principle of causation."

The new filings in Iowa, Kansas, Maryland, West Virginia, and Wisconsin mean 45 states have now taken legal action in recent years against Purdue. Michigan announced last week that it's looking for law firms to help it sue the industry, too. And Idaho sent notices to lawyers for Purdue and the family that owns it last week that the state intends to file an administrative action.

## National

### [Yes, drug-assisted treatment is needed for opioid-addicted patients in U.S. prisons](#)

Washington Post

Nationwide, [less than 1 percent](#) of jails and prisons offer medication to treat opioid addiction, and even at Rikers, inmates must be "detoxed" — not off heroin but from their medication — before they can be transferred to state prisons, which generally do not allow medication-assisted treatment for opioid use disorder.

"Providing this treatment in correctional settings requires some expertise," said Jonathan Giftos, medical director of the opioid treatment program in the NYC jail system. "And given how rare these programs are, it can be hard for some jurisdictions to know where to look for resources or support."

A result is that too many [inmates] end up in hospitals where doctors scramble to treat overdoses that might have been prevented. Some never make it there. This failure reflects a fundamental misunderstanding of addiction, a confused view of criminal justice, and a missed opportunity to save lives.



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## Georgia

[Cobb's Opioid Fight: New Program is Promising](#)

MDJOnline.com

[Cobb County Acting District Attorney John Melvin] said the new project's investigator, Matthew Mize, will be dedicated to reviewing all opioid-related cases to dig up leads for law enforcement to identify and target distributors and deal with the supplies of drugs. That's half of the challenge – to cut off the supplies – while the other half is working to cut demand, essentially the assignment of case worker Latoya Inzar, who will provide direct support for addicts and refer them and their families to programs for help. These include the county's accountability courts that offer alternatives to jail through treatment programs and other avenues.

## North Dakota

[Opioid Lawsuit 'Oversimplifies the Problem,' Rules North Dakota Judge](#)

Governing

Burleigh County District Judge James Hill explained the reasons for dismissing the case in a 27-page order that said "Purdue has no control over its product after it is sold to distributors, then to pharmacies, and then prescribed to customers."

"The state's effort to hold one company to account for this entire, complex public health issue oversimplifies the problem," Hill wrote.

The lawsuit alleged Purdue violated the state's consumer fraud law through deceptive practices and unconscionable practices. In his decision, Hill said Purdue's marketing and promotion were allowed because the drugs were FDA approved and followed marketing procedures.

## Oklahoma

[Judge rules Oklahoma's public nuisance law applies to opioids; lawsuit trial on track to start May 28](#)

Tulsa World

A trial in Oklahoma's multibillion-dollar lawsuit against opioid manufacturers remains on track to start May 28.

Cleveland County District Judge Thad Balkman on Monday rejected drug company arguments that the lawsuit should be dismissed because the state is attempting to misapply Oklahoma's public nuisance law.