

SENATORS McCAIN & GILLIBRAND INTRODUCE BILL TO COMBAT OPIOID ADDICTION & ABUSE

Washington, D.C. – U.S. Senators John McCain (R-AZ) and Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY) recently introduced bipartisan legislation to combat opioid addiction and abuse by limiting the initial supply of opioid prescription for acute pain to seven days. Opioid addiction and abuse is commonly happening to those being treated for acute pain, such as a broken bone or wisdom tooth extraction. This federal legislation is modeled after laws in several states, including Arizona and New York.

“One of the main causes for the alarming increase in drug overdoses in the United States is the over-prescription of highly addictive opioids, which have increased by 300 percent over the last 15 years,” **said Senator McCain**. “In fact, people who are addicted to prescription opioids are 40 times more likely to become addicted to heroin. In Arizona alone, heroin and opioid overdoses have skyrocketed, with the Arizona Department of Health Services reporting that more than 1,000 people required emergency room treatment for drug overdoses in 2014 while heroin-caused deaths increased by 44 percent between 2013 and 2014. Our legislation builds on the important steps taken by Arizona Governor Doug Ducey last fall to tackle a root cause of this epidemic by limiting the supply of an initial opioid prescription for acute pain to seven days. We have a long way to go to end the scourge of drugs across our communities, but this legislation is an important step forward in preventing people from getting hooked on these deadly drugs.”

“Our bipartisan bill would target one of the root causes of the opioid addiction crisis, which is the over-prescription of these powerful and addictive drugs for acute pain,” **said Senator Gillibrand**. “Too many lives have been destroyed, too many families have been torn apart, and too many communities all over New York are suffering because of this tragic epidemic. I am proud to join with Senator McCain in this urgent fight against the over-prescription of opioids, and I look forward to seeing it pass through the Senate as quickly as possible.”

Under current federal law, a medical professional must receive a license from the Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) in order to be allowed to prescribe a schedule II, III, or IV controlled substance in the United States. This registration must be renewed every three years. This legislation would require medical professionals to certify, as part of their DEA registration, that they will not prescribe an opioid as an initial treatment for acute pain in an amount that exceeds a seven-day supply, and may not provide a refill.

This limit does not apply to the treatment of chronic pain, pain being treated as part of cancer care, hospice or other end of life care, or pain treated as part of palliative care.